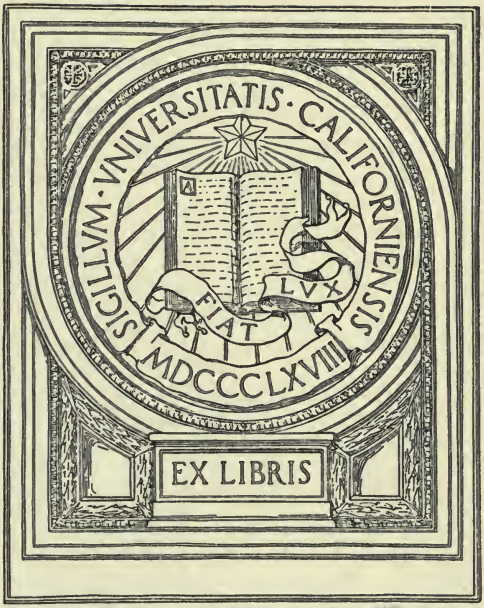
THE HEART OF ALSACE

BENJAMIN VALLOTTON


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THE HEART OF ALSACE

BY

BENJAMIN VALLOTTON

Author of "Potterat and the War"

"Wouldst thou change our Alsatian race?
Sooner might'st thou our hearts displace."

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA



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1918

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To

THE MEMORY OF

MY ALSATIAN PUPILS

WHO DIED FOR FRANCE

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PREFACE

THE annexed provinces will have no reason to blush for their half-century of slavery! Those who have failed to keep the compact of silent fidelity are but a handful. The hostages of defeat, Alsatians and Lorraines have courageously accepted the part of the representatives of human dignity protesting against brutal force. The small nations owe them a deep debt of gratitude. Their courageous resistance has had this result: that henceforth the strong will hesitate to treat the weak like a flock of cattle to be driven at will.

Twelve years spent in Alsace have filled the writer of these pages with a respect for that country which it is hard to express in words. The conquerors have flattered, threatened, abused, struck (witness the Saverne affair, in which the odious and the ridiculous vied with each other); the Alsatians have opposed the dyke of their good sense to the turbid waters of Pan-Germanism, fortified by their attachment to the traditions of liberty and culture derived from their distant past, and by two centuries of community with France.

Alsace (and if I say nothing of Lorraine it is because I confine myself to things I have actually seen and to some extent experienced) has known only the Germany

puffed up with pride, and infatuated with her science and her victories, who came into the Reichsland to colonize, to "civilize," to preach the whole gospel of Pan-Germanism, the fruit of which, after a rapid and inevitable evolution, has been the most savage of all wars. When we pass in review the methods and practices suddenly revealed to a horrified world, and remember that Alsace was given over, bound hand and foot, to the men responsible for these methods and practices, we can form some idea of the sufferings of the annexed provinces since they were torn from France.

I said one day to a pedagogue who was dealing out harsh measure in Alsace:

"Can't you put yourself in the place of the Alsatians for a moment?"

With an arrogant gesture, he replied:

"We don't wish to put ourselves in their places. We are here to manifest our strength."

These words give a very exact indication of the spirit which has informed attempts to Germanize the "long-lost brothers." Many of the German officials show indisputable professional virtues; the administration is remarkable for its habits of order, its organizing abilities, its rectitude, qualities which all must admire; but it is no less notable for a want of tact, a determination to break and crush those in subjection to it, a supreme contempt for the feelings of those who had been severed from their fatherland by the sword.

Every noble soul has been impelled to resist.

The pages of this book, a record of daily experiences, were dictated to the heart of a Swiss by his love of liberty. They tell the humble commonplace truth concerning simple lives, spent in the quietude of a narrow valley.

Do you remember, friend Bacher? . . . We went at the top of Hartmannswillerkopf, in a trench where the soldiers were watching, their fingers on the trigger of their guns, a dozen yards from the foe. A few paces from us, the Chief Adjutant Antoine had just been killed by a bullet through his forehead. There was an odour of death in the air; the entrails of the mountain were laid bare. We looked alternately through a narrow loop hole at the plain of Alsace, the smoke of Mulhouse, and above all, at the ruins of Cernay and Vieux-Thann at our feet. How many ruined villages we had passed through on the preceding day! How many hundreds of graves we had seen! And you said suddenly, as if speaking to yourself — you, who gave up all and risked all at the call of honour:

"Poor Alsace! But there is happiness in her suffering!"

How I envied you! And how well I understood what one of my Alsatian pupils, mortally wounded, had said before his death at the age of twenty-three:

"I am very happy!"

B. V.

Ouchy.
September 1, 1918.

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

THE HEART OF ALSACE

I

WHEN Aunt Emma heard that her nephew was going to Alsace, she remarked unctuously:

"Let us hope he will behave prudently there. It is not his business to fan the flame."

His University studies at Lausanne having come to an end, in token whereof a little old secretary had handed him the customary parchment, André Reymond was his own master. Hitherto, when he had been told, "Do this," he had done it; "Read that," he had read it; "Translate this passage," he had translated it to the best of his ability. . . . All at once, the certificated persons who teach one to speak, write, and think, had disappeared, and he stood face to face with life, which one must get through somehow, elbowing one's neighbours, meeting rebuffs with a smile, playing one's part.

Sentimental by nature, and with a heart ravaged by an impossible love-affair, Reymond felt an almost physical need to see something of the world before he was caught up into the machinery of routine: the college in the small country town, the bewildered little boys one drags along from a declension to an irregular verb, the petty salary, the petty cares, the petty successes, the eter-

nal harking back to beginnings, a kind of narrow worth, of puny dignity, until the day when a colleague in a frock-coat pours out the customary periods on your grave.

To see the world, did I say? When a youth is the eldest of seven brothers and sisters, the youngest of whom is still an infant, and his parents, terrified by the rising prices of provisions, thrusts the elders of the brood resolutely out of the nest, there is not much choice of methods. What a good idea it was of Monsieur Bohler's to engage a tutor for his children! . . . Alsace . . . storks, hop-gardens, old men in red waistcoats, women in caps with large black bows. . . . Alsace, the tragic land where strangers press your hand and murmur: "Long live France!" Thus at least did it suggest itself to Reymond, whose ideas of it were founded on lachrymose lyrics and feuilletons whose heroes, like Hannibal, bound themselves by terrible oaths! His imagination was fired. He left his native town on a warm September morning, accompanied by the good wishes of his family and the moderating counsels of his Aunt Emma.

Farewell, calm waters of Leman, farewell to the optimism of curving bays and sunlit slopes!

At Basle the young man wandered through streets bordered by low houses. On the lofty terrace of the Cathedral of pink sandstone, he lost himself in contemplation of these new horizons. To the right the hills, the distant chaos of the mountains, the blue line of the valleys, the little country districts with their clear rivers, each snugly enclosed in the space allotted to it by Nature,

with its acres, fields, flock, and belfry. In front and to the left, the Duchy of Baden, the plain that stretches out between the Vosges and the Black Forest, and then more hills, but without the massive groundwork of rock, hills that undulate gently, like a stormy sea sinking to rest, allowing one to divine beyond them tracts of level ground, marshes, heaths, rivers with sluggish waters, and the smoke of busy towns.

Reymond's birthplace was a canton from which tragedy is banished. Its inhabitants drink wine. They live without violent passions and mad ambitions. They crack jokes; they have a gentle belief in equality and liberty, but, above all, in happiness. Reymond, parted from these peaceful surroundings for the first time at the age of twenty-two, was moved. His eyes turned again and again to the river. The torrent foams round the surface of the rocks, gathering up the cold waters of the glaciers, hardly abating its turbulence in a lake, amusing itself again by leaping down among the rocks of Schaffhausen, and roaring between the narrow banks; then, suddenly expanding, it turns its back on the land of the mountains; its green waters roll in strength, they slap the abutments of bridges and glide among the reeds with an impulse so unanimous that for an instant, in spite of the vortex of whirlpools, they produce an illusion of perfect immobility.

Reymond strained his ears to catch the rustling movements of this monster with supple scales. Before this mass, sweeping forward irresistibly, his ideas were in

upheaval; he conceived of forces that despise, deny, and crush; he felt himself carried away, reduced to nothingness by this green river, going off to conquer the world with the confidence of a violence that grinds and pulverizes.

Resting his hands on the warm stone of the terrace-wall, Raymond seemed to hear the soft voice of his Aunt Emma, the gentle pacifist: "Be careful, my boy. Don't excite the Alsatians. War is so horrible!" The river flowed on to its fate.

In the central hall of the railway-station was a cosmopolitan mob; persons running, others gesticulating, rows of commissionaires with buckled straps, persons who had subsided, exhausted, on a bench and sat mopping their heated foreheads, all types and all tongues, as seen in a corridor through which every one has to pass. Through a half-open door, people were to be observed, eating with great gravity. A huge advertisement of a special chocolate dominated the hurly-burly of this return after the holidays. It represented a flower-spangled meadow at the foot of violet peaks, in which stood sleek milch cows and a theatrical shepherd, carolling to the sun. Reymond cast a lingering look at these cows. Then, seizing his valise, he followed the crowd.

In the German Custom-house voices were lowered, as if in deference to the dismal discipline which reigned in the place. The Customs officers, haughtily civil, in belted green tunics, bent over the luggage, felt among

it, asked brief questions, entirely absorbed in those professional rites which culminate in the hieroglyphs they trace with chalk. In other countries Customs officers are sceptical, or good-natured, or gallant. Those of Germany have the gravity proper to servants of the Empire. They watch its portals as outpost sentries. *Kaiserliche Zollrevision.* Kaiserlich! This is the business device, the rallying sign, the mystic word, the secret of success. Kaiserlich! Posts, prisons, policemen, and prefects, all are Kaiserlich. And on the buckles of belts we read: *Gott mit uns.* The Emperor and God! The two forces, which are but one, proclaim themselves on the very frontier.

Reymond bore himself humbly. His voice sounded muffled. When the man in green declared himself satisfied, he passed unobtrusively into the corridor where the man who punches the tickets submitted to him waits mournfully in a kind of cage. No one would ever think of laughing, whistling, or joking here. The atmosphere was impressive, orderly, decent, heavy.

Presently the train was gliding smoothly over the plain of Alsace, among potato-fields and copses and vine-clad slopes. A dull noise intimated the passage of the train through a station. Then the traveller noted the red cap of the station-master, the man at the level crossing shouldering arms, the policeman with his spiked helmet. And all saluted the passing train.

"Mülhausen!"

Standing on the platform, Reymond was considering which way to go, when a man with a short, bristling moustache touched him on the arm.

"Where do you come from, sir?"

"From Lausanne."

"And you are Swiss?"

"I am."

"You serve in the army?"

"Yes."

"Infantry?"

"Yes."

"The name of your commanding officer, please?"

"Apothéloz."

"And where are you going?"

"To Friedensbach."

"Thank you. The train starts in two hours. Down there."

The police-officer in plain clothes moved away, leaving Reymond petrified by this formal interrogatory greeting him as he stepped from the train, this threatening politeness, this steel-grey scrutiny boring into the depths of his eyes.

"Damnable country!" thought the young man. "You were a fool to bind yourself for two years! If they begin to suspect you the very first day, you are likely to have a pleasant time."

Much impressed, he set out to explore Mülhausen, strolling haphazard from street to street, on the watch for a word, a gesture, a scene which should evoke the Alsace

of his dreams. The passers-by spoke a guttural *patois*. There were German inscriptions on the shop-fronts. At the cross-roads stood huge policemen wearing the inevitable spiked helmet. Noticing some persons in front of him who were talking French, Reymond followed them instinctively until the moment when they looked back at him so distrustfully, dropping their voices, that he fell behind.

Not far from some barracks, soldiers were drinking beer on the terrace of a *Wirtschaft*. If an officer passed, buttoned tightly in his long blue tunic, or a square-jawed non-commissioned officer, these men sprang up, clicking their heels sharply together, holding up their chins, extending their little fingers against the seams of their trousers, as if mesmerized. Falling back into their chairs, they plunged their noses anew into their mugs, ready to jump up again at the warning clink of a sword on the pavement. Reymond, accustomed to a discipline tempered by geniality, was astonished; he looked at the round faces of the soldiers, seeking the imperceptible smile of one who is not a complete dupe, or evidences of weariness, and finding nothing but a kind of intoxication of subservience, a superstitious reverence for the emblems of rank.

In front of the iron gate of the barracks a sentry paced backwards and forwards, pirouetted, counted his steps, pirouetted again and again, like an automaton fully wound up. In the courtyard, a hundred soldiers were stamping on the ground with disconcerting gravity, a

kind of sacred fury, at the orders of a non-commissioned officer who might have been in command of a brigade, so loudly did he yell. At a sign from the sentry, Reymond moved away.

A canal bordered by poplar-trees. Barges coming from France or Germany cleft the dead water with their broad breasts. On the decks of these craft barking dogs ran along the flat edges, and then stood motionless, nose to nose, belching forth insults before going their way — irreconcilable creatures with curly coats and bearded chops, giving utterance to things their masters were saying within themselves. These masters, red-haired and placid, fellows with a lively twist of the hips, wearing gaily-coloured handkerchiefs round their throats, leaned on the tiller, looking at each other. And the slow barges crossed each other, their smooth flanks slipping along in opposite directions, some towards a lower, others towards a lighter sky.

. . . Again the train was gliding across the plain, among heaths where broom and heather mingled and hares and pheasants crouched. The Vosges were nearer. At a narrowing of the valley, prettily grouped about its cathedral with bronzed tiles, appeared an unexpected town: Thann. And the policeman was there on the watch. . . . Then the valley, the river with its white pebbles, the inn near the arched bridge, the villages planted among meadows, and in the valley the little train threading its way, amusing itself by whistling to rouse an echo, hiding itself in a tunnel for fun, acclaimed by

washerwomen kneeling before their tubs, shouted at by boys, heralded by barking dogs. And up above, the blue of the Vosges mountains, intersected by the deeper blue of valleys running in every direction, a gay, translucent blue laid upon the roseate earth and yellowing bushes.

Seated opposite to Reymond was a smooth-faced young man with a pale complexion and a bitter mouth, who seemed ready to embark upon a monologue for men only. He started at his solitary fellow-traveller, and began suddenly:

"A fine day."

"Yes, indeed. And the country is charming."

"You are a Frenchman, perhaps?"

"No. I am from French Switzerland."

"Really? And I thought they talked only a German *patois* in Switzerland! Have you come to spend a few days in this corner of the world?"

"A few years."

"Ah! well met. . . . We shall probably be neighbours at the restaurant-table. . . . The portly Mademoiselle Schmoler, whose voice is as harmonious as her name, has already trumpeted your advent. . . . My name is Coquart, at your service. I am in the chemical department of the factory. . . . You'll find it delightful! . . . Workmen, officials in green hats, storks. . . . The girls are all some forty kilometres away."

Reymond blushed ingenuously.

"Well, but Alsace . . ."

"All gammon! . . . Books tell you all that, and bar-

rel-organs (the chemist, seizing an imaginary handle, cast his eyes heavenwards and whined: "Alsace-Lorraine . . ."). Commonplaces for the delight of the soft-hearted. They do very well on the stage, for the apotheosis: music! and the Alsacienne sinks into the arms of the French officer. In reality, there are perhaps some few grandpapas who remember us. But as to the majority! . . . Well, in the first place, they speak a lingo . . . oh! I shall never believe that it can mean anything. . . . And the *revanche!* . . . The place for that is the Deroulède Museum."

There was a silence, broken by Reymond:

"But there are the Germans and the Alsatians?"

"Certainly. But it's not very easy to distinguish them with the naked eye. . . . It's very difficult to know what people think when you can't understand what they say. In books, of course . . . zim, boom, up with sentiment! In real life profit is the main thing. And then, you know, it is a long time since the annexation. A good deal of water has flowed under the bridges since the war. One must live. You see, I don't blame them. . . . Meanwhile, it is not very lively."

The train stopped. The chemist Coquart jerked his thumb at a little sunny station and a waiting carriage.

"This is Landbach. I suppose you get out here? Your employer's house is nearer here than Friedensbach. Oh! you have plenty of time. The express is in no great hurry. Look, those urchins who are coming forward are your pupils. So long! Delighted to have met you."

The two boys approached shyly, hat in hand. They seemed to be about fourteen and fifteen respectively. Jean, the elder, tall and thin, with a bird-like head, and an attractive expression, touched by the melancholy of a youth growing up in solitude; René, the younger, had a more knowing air, nice round cheeks, and a roguish twinkle. They stammered: "Have you had a comfortable journey, Monsieur?"

The coachman, a big ruddy fellow, had already stowed away the luggage. The horses sprang forward, shaking their manes. Master and pupils examined each other stealthily. René, dilating his nostrils and pursing up his lips, ventured on a grimace, followed by a laugh.

"That boy," said Reymond to himself, "is a handful. If I don't take the offensive, and attack him with absurdities, my authority will be nipped in the bud."

Then, suddenly:

"You look anaemic, my boy. We shall have to take care of you. And what do you think of the future of metaphysics?"

"Monsieur," replied the bewildered René, "I don't know them."

"That's your fault. They go about a good deal. True, you live somewhat off the main lines of communication. And how old is the aunt of the municipal secretary?"

"I don't know, Monsieur."

"Well, is she any better?"

"I don't know her at all, Monsieur."

"You seem to know no one. I thought you would have a wider circle of acquaintances."

René, completely quelled, was reduced to silence. The coachman, whose finger-tips emerged from sleeves too long for him, drew up before a closed iron gate, and cracked his whip to bring the lodge-keeper out. The man hurried forward, readily subservient. The carriage, somewhat shy of conveying its cushions through this scene of labour, bumped over the uneven slag, passing diagonally across the courtyard of the factory, which was enclosed by low symmetrical buildings with pointed roofs. Behind the window-panes gleamed the sudden light of a reviving fire and naked torsoes; elsewhere heads were seen bent over ledgers; on every side there was the slap of transmission-belts, the whir of machinery, a smell of oil and sweat, and, above all this, a plume of smoke, resolving itself slowly into a fine black rain. Finally, the master's house, with a very simple façade, disfigured by a marquise due to the skill of some local craftsman.

After the questions usually put to a traveller, the party sat down to dinner. It was evident that Monsieur Bohler disliked chatter. Sitting very erect, in a coat buttoned up to the cravat, he confined himself to a few brief phrases, as if his business cares pursued him even in the family circle. The square forehead enframed in short white hair, the masterful clean-cut features, the clear, authoritative look, the abrupt gestures, inspired fear and respect. He seemed the natural centre of the

group. Madame Bohler sat facing him, fair and slender, gay, yet with a touch of gravity that gave an extraordinary charm to her pretty face; she looked very young beside her big sons, to whom she spoke chiefly by smiles.

To keep himself in countenance Reymond contemplated the decanters, which sparkled in the lamplight. Embarrassed by this speechless reception, he systematically refused to help himself a second time, in spite of the mute insistence of an old servant, who pressed the dishes upon him, breathing hard into his ear. He thought to himself: "We might be in the crypt of a cathedral. . . . I wonder if they dislike me. . . . I cannot begin to tell stories. . . . One is evidently expected to hold one's tongue."

"What a splendid sunset there was this evening," said Madame Bohler, unexpectedly. "The Drumont was ablaze."

The young tutor did not know the Drumont yet. René promised to show it to him the following morning from the schoolroom window.

They went into the drawing-room. Reymond held back to let Monsieur Bohler pass.

"Please go first. You are my guest."

"I'm afraid we shall never get on together," thought Reymond. He felt very lonely, very far from all he loved.

They sat down. A drawing-room not in everyday use is as dismal as a family vault. Statuettes stood dully on brackets. The Discobolus seemed to have lost heart,

and to have given up the idea of hurling his missile. There were corners where the candelabra shed but a feeble glimmer. On the walls hung some uninteresting pictures. But a violoncello near the open piano spoke of life here.

Madame Bohler questioned Reymond. Had he any brothers and sisters? . . . Seven! There was a moment of stupefaction. Did he live on the shores of Lake Geneva?

At nine o'clock exactly, Monsieur Bohler frowned.

"Come, boys."

They were pinching each other's calves on a corner of the sofa. At these words, which were repeated every evening, they rose, embraced their parents, shook hands with their tutor, and wished him good-night. From the corridor came the sound of laughter and of resounding slaps.

"Let us go into the smoking-room."

Suddenly, Monsieur Bohler became a new man. He offered Reymond a cigar. He himself, stretched out in an arm-chair, lit his pipe, puffed out a cloud of smoke, smiled benevolently, and began to talk with much animation. It was one of those metamorphoses often to be seen in those who are a prey to crushing responsibilities; they have their hours of expansion, all the more attractive for being rare.

Reymond was to learn to know those manufacturers of the small towns scattered among the Vosges valleys, who rise at six every day of their lives, and go to work

more punctually than the meanest employé, severe to others and also to themselves, a part of the machinery they have set up, the slaves of that machinery. At noon they escape for an hour. And in the evening, when the hooter sounds and the workmen have trooped out through the iron gates with a clatter of sabots, they scan the prices of wool or cotton, run through the letters of the last post, read the petition of the man dismissed for drunkenness, sign a hundred papers — the soul of the great enterprise which gives bread to hundreds of families.

If they relax their grasp the whole machine creaks. The last lamp to be extinguished is theirs. Meals are a matter of business which must be despatched expeditiously, like all the rest. And looking out of the window as they fold their table-napkin, they see the courtyard where the rails of the Decauvilles gleam, the roofs and chimneys of the factory which never suffers them to forget it for a moment. On Sundays, however, they call their dogs. Gaitered and clad in heather-mixtures, pipe in mouth and gun on shoulder, they take the road that leads to the forest. When these men, whom the people call in their *patois* the Barons of the Chimney-stacks, return to their homes, they are not expansive. The windows of the office are already beckoning to them.

Their women spend much time alone; while their husbands are hunting the hare or playing auction-bridge at their clubs, their horses trot along the road that winds like a ribbon along the valley; they pay visits to each other, and as the little towns are far enough apart to

prevent them from seeing each other frequently, yet near enough to permit of weekly intercourse, they have many subjects to discuss over a cup of tea. They talk of the last play published by *L'Illustration,* which they hope to see in Paris in the spring, of the novel just begun in the review. Meantime the children play in the garden, climbing trees and dabbling in the basin of the fountain.

Then another slow week begins to the eternal rhythm of the machines. There are a thousand household tasks: the cleaning days, the washing days, the making of *Kougelhopfs,* for the Alsatian housewife is her cook's collaborator, and is not afraid of the heat of the stove. But she also plays her part in civic matters: the crèche, the orphan school, the infirmary, the domestic training school, the old women with coughs. Returning from her perambulations, she sits down to her piano. And still the machines rumble on.

It is a life of austere charm, very simple, very real — a solid life in which every one contributes his daily effort unostentatiously. And thus the dyke is built up which the enemy cannot pierce.

All this Monsieur Bohler explained to his boys' tutor in his concise speech.

"We are counting a good deal on you. . . . I am afraid I am a poor kind of father. It is a serious matter, I know. The Socialist gentry, of course, think we all have a good time. As a fact, we are slaves. We have to struggle unceasingly. . . . Competition, overproduction. . . . And Alsace is so out-of-the-way, so far from ports

and coalfields. Then we have so many other drawbacks. . . . The political situation. . . . It is an arduous game. One has to be always on the spot . . . and one's family suffers. . . . On the other hand, we can hold no intercourse with the officials and professors . . . and the result is isolation. Each man shuts himself up in his shell. We have to be self-sufficing. The education of our sons is a problem for us. There are, of course, the official schools, which are good, and even excellent up to a certain point, but they destroy individuality. And, besides, Alsatians are fed on lies in them. You see, you will have to be a great deal to our boys."

"I will do my best," replied Reymond. "I am already interested in them. René has a scientific and sporting bent, I should say. Jean is more dreamy, more literary."

Both father and mother smiled, touched and pleased.

"Oh!" said Madame Bohler, "René is still a child. He is barely fourteen. For the moment he is all for athleticism. He talks of nothing but matches and records. He knows the names of all the boxers in the world. But he has a good heart. Only he must be handled the right way, firmly. . . . Jean is thoughtful. He is fond of music, a bit sentimental, philosophical . . ."

"In short," interrupted Monsieur Bohler, "they are two boys much like other boys, not ill-disposed, not unintelligent, who must be made into men."

"You might tell Monsieur Reymond about his other pupils on Wednesday and Saturday afternoons. You

must know, monsieur, that a French tutor is a *rara avis* among us. Everybody wants him."

"Yes, it's true. Twice a week you will have a little class. You must not boast of this, for it will rather exceed the educational regulations. Our masters dread the diffusion of the French language in Alsace above all things. The number of pupils authorized to take a course not given in the German language is strictly limited. So your lessons will take the form of walks together, if you are willing. Besides our two boys, you will have Emile Zumbach, André Berger, and Charles Weiss, my godson, the son of my agent. You will certainly meet Monsieur Weiss presently. He will teach you to know and love the Vosges. He is a delightful person, somewhat of a dilettante, a great collector of mushrooms, raiser of poultry and rabbits, a nursery gardener, a horticulturist, a manufacturer, and I know not what besides. The moving spirit of our valley. A born optimist. And yet he has had a great grief. Two years ago his eldest son died at Munich during his term of military service."

"At Munich?"

"You are surprised. But, after all, some Alsatians must remain in Alsace. Those who can hold their own under the whip are her true sons. I shall send my boys to France in two years' time; but, then, my wife is a Frenchwoman, and I myself fought in 1870. So there are things which are impossible to us."

There was a sound of wheels in the courtyard. Madame Bohler rose.

"You will not understand our old Alsace in a day. Elsewhere, folks live and let live. Here, nothing is simple. If one goes, it is exile. If one remains, it is a renewal of suffering every day. . . . But I think the carriage is waiting for you. You will lodge at Friedensbach, as we told you, with the old Schmolers, the parents of Madame Vogel, a widow, and Mademoiselle Stéphanie Schmoler, the owners of the restaurant where you will take your meals. They are excellent people. You will only have to come down one story from your bedroom to the dining-room. You will have companions: chemists and employés of our offices, a few Germans also, I believe — officials. But I think they have a separate table."

"Isn't there a Monsieur Coquart there? We travelled together."

Monsieur Bohler began to laugh.

"Oh! he's just a buffoon. That's why the Germans tolerate him."

In the darkness, through which the trickle of the river could be heard, the carriage rolled along an unknown road. Dogs barked indignantly in the distance. Then a deep calm fell on everything. A woman pulled back a curtain. The lowered persiennes twinkled against the black walls of the houses. The carriage stopped presently in the heart of the little town before a very low house which, with its projecting wings, looked like a sitting hen. There was a flutter of welcome, in spite of the late hour. Mademoiselle Stéphanie held the lamp, behind which her cheeks shone like ripe fruits. Madame

Vogel was a highly decorative widow, whose professional smile brought out a most attractive dimple on either side of her chin. Reymond was shown his place at the end of a table already set for tomorrow's breakfast, and his luggage was carried up the steep, well waxed staircase leading to the home of the old people.

They were a delicious pair! Rosy and benevolent, they gazed at you with old-world dignity: the old man short, bearded, and long-haired like a Father Christmas, with an amazingly round face in which little limpid eyes twinkled under bristling eyebrows. His wife, who wore a white cap modestly tied under her chin, submissive, bent, and wrinkled, was always trotting about, no one knew why. And each time he called her, often for no reason, "Jacobine!" she replied like an echo: "What is it, Joseph?" This she said in French, for it is a point of honour with the old folks to speak it still, more or less, with that Alsatian accent of which it may be said that if heaven and earth pass away, it will remain.

Joseph Schmoler received his guest gravely.

"You will be very quiet here with us. . . . Only ourselves, two old good-for-nothings, our two daughters, and Jacob, our little grandson of nine, a very obedient child."

Jacobine showed him two rooms which smelt of soap; he saw a china stove, some artless engravings, and a number of sea-shells, relics of some roaming ancestor; the bed stood on high legs, and was surmounted by a tester of printed cretonne.

The old couple retired solemnly, with benedictions on their guest.

Reymond closed his eyes. . . . In his dreams he saw Lake Leman, its russet shores bending over the smiling waters; the Basle *Münster* and its cloisters paved with tombstones, the Rhine rolling its green waves, spiked helmets, Coquart, the Bohlers' drawing-room, Joseph and Jacobine, the little Alsatian town under the stars. . . .

II

FRIEDENSBACH,
October 20, 1907.

DEAR PARENTS,

. . . I went back yesterday to old Kraut, to give him the certificate of good conduct and morals you sent me, as it was lacking in my collection. Kraut planted his spectacles on the extreme point of his inquisitive nose. After going through all my papers again, one by one, examining the seals, the signature, the very flourishes, he finally said in French, also paternally:

"You have an excellent certificate of morals and general conduct. . . . That's more essential than anything. . . . You are going to teach Monsieur Bohler's sons, I understand? . . . Teach them French, I believe? I speak French too, like a good many Alsatians. One may be a true German and yet be able to speak foreign languages."

I maliciously insinuated once more that I am a French Swiss.

I thought Kraut had suddenly gone mad. He grasped the edge of his desk with both hands, he half tore himself away from the well-being of his padded stool, and thrusting his enormous head into the opening in the grating, he shouted, tapping on his stomach: "And your heart. . . . Is it Swiss or French?" I drew back in alarm.

Kraut then, seeing my confusion, fell back upon his stool, and laughed as he laughs in the restaurant when some one explains a pun for his benefit — laughed long and loud, with face, throat, shoulders, and stomach. By degrees the paroxysm subsided. Then Kraut concluded:

"Thank you, Monsieur le Professeur. Everything is in order. As an Alsatian, I welcome you to our German soil."

As twelve o'clock was about to strike, and Monsieur Kraut began to take off his black calico sleeves, I offered him a cigar, which he accepted very naturally. The negroes, we are told, appease the fury of their gods by little presents. Why should not civilized persons use the same methods to propitiate an omnipotent bureaucracy?

The Schmolers tell me that this Kraut is not a bad fellow; he loves his ease above all things; as to being an Alsatian, he comes straight from the heart of Thuringia. He is one of the innumerable Germans who have fallen on Alsace-Lorraine as starlings flock to a vineyard of ungarnered grapes. They are very comfortable there. They increase and multiply. They burrow into the soil. They say unctuously: "*Unser Elsass*, our Alsace!" And their children learn the *patois* of the country. These sons of true-born Pomeranians and Brandenburghers even come to treat those on the other side of the Rhine as *Schwobs*. But the blood that flows in their veins has a basis of beer, and not of Riquewihr wine. They retain that love of the colossal, that passion for

bowing, that subservience to the world of command, that collectivity of soul, of which the true Alsatian knows nothing.

I am amused to see old Kraut every evening at the restaurant. He lords it at the German table with the head-keeper of the forest, the magistrate, a secretary of the excise, and a few humbler scribes. It seems that he has been a widower for five years. His children are out in the world. So Kraut is dull. His heart stirs within him. He fixes a melting eye on the cunningly arranged tresses of our hostess, Madame Louise Vogel, the handsome Alsatian widow. With his goggle eyes, his puny shoulders, his gasping breath, he is like a frog hypnotized by a water-lily. It is obvious that for him marriage with an Alsatian would crown the work of annexation.

When we joke Madame Vogel about this, she replies calmly:

"Monsieur Kraut is an excellent customer."

She sees in him only the man who pays.

There are, you must know, two tables at the restaurant, two water-tight compartments. The assortment takes place without any previous arrangement, each person following his instinct. Aunt Emma must not protest. I think that if strangers had seized one of our cantons, we Swiss would hold ourselves aloof from them. It is a highly moral impulse. I play my part in this defensive operation discreetly. At the end of the room the officials sit in state. Fixing a napkin between two buttons of a waistcoat becomes a rite. A sonorous *Mahlzeit* stands

for a prayer. After this, eating begins — the essential thing, as Kraut says. At a quarter-past one they retire with military punctuality, after a bow, invariably of the same depth. During the meal, the two tables — at ours we have Coquart, the disillusioned chemist, and some half-dozen Alsatians — ignore each other. At one the diners flourish and *Zeit*, the *Strassburger Post*, at the other the *Express* or the *Journal d'Alsace-Lorraine*. Morally the bolts are shot. The two groups bow to each other on arrival and on departure. They never go beyond this. I can imagine nothing more correct and more dignified.

The other day, after the officials had made their bows, I asked the Alsatian Kleinlogel: "Do you bear them such a grudge as all that?" He replied: "Oh! they're quite amiable" (*chentils*). I saw that it would be useless to insist. I am as yet too new in the country to invite confidences. Then Friedensbach numbers less than two thousand inhabitants. Everything is repeated. So the two races live side by side. They have need one of another. But they scrupulously respect the clauses of a tacit convention. They sulk, without indulging in futile provocation. This is what makes Coquart say sometimes: "After all, which are you, French or German?" They answer, not unintelligently: "We are Alsatians." The day before yesterday Coquart lost his temper: "Alsatians! Alsatians! One is either French or German!" Kleinlogel answered very calmly: "What one says and what one thinks are not quite the same thing."

When he is alone with me, Coquart vociferates: "They have no blood in their veins. And these are the best. Imagine what the others are."

"And what should we do in their place?"

Coquart whistled between his teeth: "*Malbrouck s'en va en guerre.*"

A week ago I began to take German lessons from the schoolmaster Kummel. By chance one day, behind the post of the level crossing, I asked the way of this gaunt magister. After this, we bowed to each other when we met. And now I am his pupil. I should no doubt have done better if I had gone to the other teacher, an Alsatian, whereas Kummel is a Prussian. I did not know this when I made the arrangement. . . . Poor Kummel! He is nauseously pedagogic, very obsequious. The phrase "to profit" has no secrets for him. Sometimes I am not sure whether it is I who am learning German or he who is learning French. As the lessons progress, he gradually unmasks his batteries. He is bent on converting me, and shows a pertinacity which amuses me. German virtues! German order! the blessings of German culture! German administration!

Aunt Emma urged me so strongly to be prudent that I confine myself to listening. Moreover, I am ready to admit that the German postal system and the German railways are as near perfection as possible. So, if the Alsatians nevertheless show themselves hostile to the *régime,* it must be because other things go to the creation of patriotism — such things as memory, sentiment, and

dignity. But what would be the use of explaining this to Kummel!

I will end with a few words about my pupils, of whom I wrote to you at length in my last letter. We are becoming very good friends. I arrange their work as I think best: Latin, Greek, French, history, geography, etc.— all that a young passman is expected to have in stock. They are just what I supposed: Jean subtle and imaginative, René more vital, more spritely, much interested in geology as long as one discourses of volcanoes, because volcanoes vomit stones and fire. On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons I am in charge of a band of five urchins. We go for walks, and talk about a great many things. You cannot imagine how Alsatian and French these boys are, but they are French because they are Alsatian. They discuss politics and strategy with delicious gravity. I will write further on this head. . . .

III

THIS morning the conscripts went off singing.

From a sky but lightly veiled in clouds a dust of fine rain was falling, washing the brilliant foliage of the trees which flaunted on the hill-sides like red and yellow banners. And with this dust of rain a gentle melancholy fell from heaven, punctuated by the tinkle of the cow-bells.

And the conscripts went off singing. The day was like all other days. At the usual hour old Catherine came to fill her pail at the fountain, in which her goitre was reflected for a moment on the dancing waters, mingling with the image of the pot-bellied deity who squats between the garrulous water-jets. . . . Twenty times at least during the day old Schmoler went to the window and leaned upon the sill. From the street all that was to be seen of him was his pipe, his nose, and his otter-skin cap. And twenty times Jacobine asked him: "What can you be looking at from that window?" To which twenty times the old man made answer in his rugged *patois:* "*Ech lueg was ech lueg*" (I am looking at what I am looking at).

What he saw was always the same, yet always new, like life. The main street running parallel with the valley and the ten side-streets, tumbling down the slopes and

rushing into it, like torrents into a river; the stream tripping and murmuring over the moss-grown paving stones; a woman throwing the parings of her vegetables into it, queer-looking things, green and white, which run along the water, catch in the eddies, escape, and dance away. Then a procession of geese. They are replete. They come and seat themselves in a circle before a door, to gossip and digest. The gander, like some admiral's vessel, with his smooth sides and his prow-like breast, waddles majestically. He sees the green-and-white objects, and stretches out his beak. The geese dart forward, rolling and pitching, splashing in the stream, screaming angrily. Now they are sitting again in front of a doorstep, where they look like a heap of snow fallen from the roof.

Now it is the children's turn. With their petticoats tucked up, grave and unseemly, they lay walnut-shells upon the stream. A dog laps the water, a cat jumps across it, wets her paws, shakes them, and runs away. And it is the same thing all the week: the older children being at school, and all who can work at the factory, there are only the infants and the old people left — all who go on all fours, as Schmoler says.

But we must not forget Herzog the shoemaker and his apprentice, always busy behind their shop-window, sewing a vamp, cutting leather, waxing thread; and the shoemaker's bald head is shaken by the vibration of the hammer as it strikes a sole, as is also the curly red pate of the apprentice.

At ten in the morning and four in the afternoon Herzog goes to the Golden Cask, where he drinks a *humpe*. When he returns to his last, dragging his slippers on the uneven stones, a white froth hangs in stalactites from his moustache, which he wipes with his sleeve. He fought at Gravelotte, but it is difficult to get the story of his campaign out of him, for he only embarks upon it when he is drunk; and this has not happened since Justice Döring sentenced him to pay a fine of fifty marks and spend a month in prison for having associated Prussia too intimately with the memory of the late Marshal Cambronne. Accordingly, he drinks his *humpe* in the morning, his *humpe* in the afternoon, and perhaps two or three in the evening, but never more. Thus his will dominates his feelings; the inner depths remain hidden, all he shows is a grimace; he lives with his truth, no longer externalizing it.

. . . And sometimes, on wheels with groaning axles, the trunks of Vosgian pines are borne along, exuding resin, breathing the aroma of sylvan solitude. Some of them grew on summits whence may be seen a corner of France, gleaming roofs, a valley like a carpet with green and grey and yellow patches, marking plots of cultivated ground. Born French, these trees too have to die German; like the conscripts, they are on their way to the distant provinces of Germany. Men accompany them, the thongs of their whips twisted round their necks — woodmen with bristly manes, sturdy fellows who raise their voices to dominate the grinding of the axles, and in-

terlard every sentence with *Gottverdammi!* These tree-trunks, these men, jolt and swear over the pavement of the town, rouse the geese, who get up and protest, excite the dogs, defile past the fountain where the pot-bellied water-god sits enthroned, and past another where the cock presides, drowning the tinkle of the water. Gradually they move into the distance; one sees only the croups of the horses, the long, light streak of the trunk, the man's blue blouse, swaying to and fro, diminishing, finally disappearing. . . .

A frock-coat on a stiff back, a neck forming three pink folds over a tight collar, a tall hat on a head amply furnished with jaw: it is the Justice of the Peace. Boots, a portly torso clad in green, eyes that run from door to door, from window to window, the spike of a helmet: it is the Policeman. Worthy men, on the whole, faithful to their duty, which is to draw up indictments and to condemn. But so distant, so rigid, so inflated, that when one sees them marching with measured tread through the peace of the little Alsatian town, frowning at the gaiety of the houses with their spritely roofs, so firmly fixed in principles, so imbued with a vexatious spirit of authority, so unmistakably representative of the royal and imperial race, one is conscious of an error of taste, a mistake in style. The stream, the half-naked children, the modest façades, the gurgling fountains, are out of scale. The one element is too gay, too much inclined to irony, too human; the other too lofty, too irascible, too unbending, too haughty. Hence the geese have risen

once more: in battle array, with outstretched beaks and turned-in toes, they proclaim that which the natives keep to themselves, and clamour urgently: "It won't do! It won't do." The officials do not even smile. They would excite less ill-will were they to smile. But no; it is written that they shall never smile, that they shall frown persistently, stamp on the pavement, arch their hips, draw up unyielding necks. And so fear arises in their wake, and sometimes hatred. It might be supposed that they prefer this state of things. Yet they are strict, honest, punctual people. Officials, soldiers, not men.

At certain hours, nevertheless, the street becomes animated. There is a sudden outburst, as if a man should come and open the lock-gates of slumbering waters. "Go!" said Messrs. Kummel and Herrenschmid, walking away with their hands clasped on the tails of their coats. What a rush of children! They are like a flock of sparrows settling upon a newly ploughed field. They run, they clamber up and down the double flights of doorsteps, they spit into the fountain, dance round the protesting geese, jump into the stream, clatter their sabots on the pavement, chanting a curious doggerel:

"Wenn der Kater nicht haarig ist
Fängt er keine Mäuse."

"Unless the tom be long of hair,
Never a mouse will fall to his share."

Putting off their sabots for slippers, the children presently appear at the windows, gnawing a hunk of bread.

Once more the lock-gates are closed. And again they are opened at the signal of the hooter, a piercing scream that dies away in the minor. On the road are bare-headed women, laughing girls, boys smoking, men carrying their jackets over their arms. The day of toil is over! The toiler may sit on the bench outside his house and play a mouth-organ, or dig in his garden, or make love to his fair neighbour. . . .

And now, as every one is at home, the big vegetable hawker swings his bell; the public crier — with a red nose and a wooden leg — beats his drum before announcing that Ulrich Schuhmacher offers the public the meat of his old cow at a mark a pound. A sound as of hail on a roof — hundreds of little hoofs tapping on the pavement — and here come the goats! In front of the forest of horns walks an old man, whose beard, stirred by the effort of his throat, sways comically when he blows the horn. The creatures stand straddling, so full are their udders, and each bleats at its own door, till it opens at last.

It is easy now to understand why old Schmoler, leaning on the window-sill twenty times a day, should have answered twenty times, "I am looking at what I am looking at."

A little society, the rhythm of habit. Nothing happens. The sun rises over one rounded height and sets behind another. Nowhere does he illuminate a more peaceful valley. And yet the fathers of those who live here once, in a terrible hour, cried aloud: "We declare

the right of the Alsatians and Lorrains to remain members of the French nation for ever inviolable, and we swear for ourselves, our children, and their descendants, to urge it eternally, by every possible means, to and against all usurpers."

Since then nearly forty years have passed, two generations.

And the conscripts went off this morning. There were twenty of them, all sturdy lads, all born in the little town, all bred on this soil, sons of the ancient land of Alsace, grandsons of those who fought at Wissembourg, many of whom are still alive.

For a week past, the conscripts had been drinking and singing. They must needs forget themselves for a while, since they are going so far away, for two whole years. They took up their station in the wine-shops betimes, in the morning. And they sang the songs they knew, the slow, sad songs they learned at school, songs brought back by their elders from the German barracks. Forty years! Habit weaves its strands. Hearts grow numb, perhaps. A boundary-mark is but a stone, but it is also the limit of language, the point beyond which everything changes, and which one cannot pass without leaving behind one for ever the house, the garden, the old folks, the graves.

And these conscripts are twenty years old! At twenty one must, of course, laugh, drink, and sing, put a flower in one's button-hole, a garland round one's hat, dance to the sound of the concertina, run after the girls, and

show oneself in the public square. Holding each other by the litttle finger, they tramp along heavily in fours, as they will march tomorrow. They sing *L'Alsace est un beau pays, Mon amour, ne t' éloigne pas trop de moi,* and many other songs which speak of the Rhine, and in which the word *Heimat* (home) recurs constantly, with heavy emphasis. What *Heimat?* . . . Meanwhile the drum beats; they march round the fountain, ribbons and flags fluttering, that red-and-white flag of which the old people say: "When it floats against the blue of the sky, we get the colour we miss." Do they really miss that blue?

The conscripts have marched past for the last time, valise in hand. There is a crowd at the station. They clamber into the carriages. They cry: "Good-bye! good luck!" They are going to Danzig, to Poland, to the fleet. The magistrate, raising his hand, wishes them a "*Gute Reise*" (good journey). They make no reply. The whistle sounds, the train moves. The crowd wave handkerchiefs. But they are men; they are twenty years old; they wave their caps and shout incoherent things which the train bears away among the autumn trees.

Without ceasing to hammer his sole, the shoemaker Herzog mutters: "Geese are fattened up before their necks are wrung."

Reymond was still constantly on the look-out for the Alsace of the novels; the Alsace where "Hurrah for France!" is shouted in the face of the police; the Alsace where fathers curse their daughters vehemently for dar-

ing to cast a glance at the handsome officer who passes. The evolutions of the conscript, their paper garlands, their songs, their noisy departure, had affected him painfully. For, after all, these grandsons of the vanquished were going to put on the spiked helmet, swear fidelity to the Emperor, offer their youth to the Empire.

He spoke of this to his companions in the restaurant, after the officials had withdrawn. Coquart tittered. Seizing an empty bottle by way of a guitar, he again began to vocalize: "*Alsace-Lorraine . . .*"

"It is very easy to make fun of people," said one of the Alsatians with smothered anger. "I, too, have served in the German Army. I am a sergeant . . . There are only three courses open to us: we may go for good and give up our country; we may break our rifles and rot in prison; we may submit and put on the spiked helmet. I say submit . . . I do not say accept."

"No!" exclaimed the others.

"But there are ways of doing so," objected Coquart. "No one forces them to sing."

"They sing? But what does it come to? Words expressing the pleasure of fellowship, nothing more. They drink, they become excited, they march in step, they sing, hardly knowing what they sing."

"And if *you* had had the Germans on your back for forty years!" said another.

"I think we should have held out better in Switzerland," said Reymond with ingenuous pride.

"We shall see when you have tried it," said the young

man who spoke with the most pronounced accent. "You don't know the Alsatian. He loathes gestures and speeches. He keeps. He hides. He does not show his roots to every one. In short, he is an Alsatian. They killed my grandfather at Sedan. And I serve in the German Army. But this does not alter the fact that they killed my grandfather. Still, I don't propose to chalk it up on the doors. I know it. That is enough. The reckoning is paid on great occasions. Meanwhile, one has to live."

They ceased talking. Shortly afterwards, Reymond paid a visit to the old Schmolers. And he put the same question to them incidentally.

"What do you think about those conscripts? They seemed quite pleased to go."

Schmoler tried to explain.

"They are young. . . . It's their first journey. . . ."

"Then, have they 'rallied' to the occupying Power?"

"Rallied?" repeated Schmoler. "What does that mean?"

"Well, have they become German?"

"They are not German, for they are Alsatian. But to protest every day for forty years is beyond the strength of man. There is no resistance to force. But none knows what is going on beneath the surface. The Alsatian is tenacious."

Schmoler laughed and took a pinch of snuff. The tall clock in its wooden case groaned before striking ten, as if some aged soul where stirring within it, Jacobine

had crossed her toil-worn hands on her black alpaca apron. Thrusting out her little withered chin, she said:

"The less one talks about such things the better. Each district provides its people, you know. . . . The postman here stands by the Schwobs, but he has two brothers in the Foreign Legion."

This postman, Julius Bader, was a merry fellow who came up the steps whistling, knocked at the doors with a "Good-day" to the inmates, and went off again whistling. To any one who would listen to him he would say: "I a French postman? I get double his pay."

And so he had two brothers with the French colours — two brothers who had sacrificed everything to obey a sort of instinct, a tradition.

"The less one talks of such things the better," repeated Jacobine.

And Schmoler added: "No resistance to force."

Each had a formula.

"And what does Jacob think of it all?"

Reymond pulled the ear of the child, who looked up, surprised.

"May he know nothing worse than we old ones have known!"

"Do you believe there will be another war?"

"It is not for me to say. God guides the ship."

Hereupon they parted.

When he returned to his own room, Reymond contemplated the tiles of his stove, ornamented with Alsatian couples waltzing; the engravings hanging on the walls, of

Napoleon at St. Helena, the rush of the Zouaves at Malakoff, the charge of the Cuirassiers at Reichshoffen. . . . And he thought of the three generations of Alsatians: the timid old people who had witnessed the great disaster, the two worthy women who sold their soup impartially to both camps, the little boy of nine, destined, perhaps, to see great and horrible things.

Meanwhile, the child was going to bed on the other side of the wall. The grandfather was chanting a prayer in a cracked voice. Shortly afterwards the three generations were snoring in different keys.

Bending over his work-table, Reymond corrected the compositions of his pupils. The theme was the speech of a Gaul chieftain: "The chief declared that liberty is the supreme good." In general the essays were awkward, confused, and diffuse, but they rang true. Here and there both Jean and René seemed to utter a cry from the heart; their summaries were almost eloquent, animated by a fine sincerity born of suffering. René put phrases of vigorous familiarity into the chief's mouth: "To deprive men of their liberty, to tear them from the country they love, is disgusting!" Jean, more literary, wrote: "It is conceivable that man should live in poverty, or as a cripple, but not as a slave! Liberty is not a blessing; it is life itself."

The clock struck eleven. The Alsatian conscripts rolled forward in the darkness.

How beautiful is All Souls' Day in this land of grief!

. . . The dead speak. They have a memory, a thought, a will to transmit. In other places they sleep. Mourners visit their graves and lay flowers on them, but they are wrapped in their formidable sleep, strangers to the living, and so remote! They are, as we say, in the other world.

In Alsace one feels them, knows that they are very near, because only they can knit up the thread of tradition, so brutally severed.

Early in the morning on All Saints' Day the bells of Friedensbach rang out, first a single one, a voice putting a question, then the three, sometimes in a full peal, sometimes very softly, as if a conversation were going on at the top of the belfry, a murmur that the November mist shuts in to the nest of stone.

Boys and girls, husbands and wives, old men and old women, have come out of their houses and closed the doors, but have not locked them, for no one is distrustful on All Saints' Day. . . . The church is full. People are standing in the passages, and under the porch where the shining ropes hang. The old priest is in the pulpit. He speaks to his flock in the rugged patois which is the fruit of the race. He is not eloquent, he is something far better. Speaking quietly and without action, his head inclining a little to one shoulder, he holds communion with eternal things. He speaks to the dead, or rather to the living one no longer sees passing along the streets of the town; for he knows only the people of God, those who live at Friedensbach, and those who live elsewhere,

in the mysterious country towards which the human caravan is wending. "We pray likewise for those of our ancestors who fell on the field of battle." A little bell tinkles; the organ swells. *Absolve, Domine!*

The graveyard is on the back of the first hill, after which come other hills that link themselves to the summits. Again hands lay hold of the ropes, and the bells speak. Behind the crucifix and the banners, the procession follows the windings of the ascent. All carry sheaves of chrysanthemums, which sway to the rhythm of the march. *Heilige Maria, bete für uns.*

Now they are standing by their graves, which the priest blesses with a sweeping gesture. And when the bells of Friedensbach are silent for a minute, one hears all those of the valley, big ones booming, little ones which have a note of hope, now an isolated sound, now voices mingled by the breeze. . . . Here it is that the past awakens. *Ci-gît Jean Burger,* says a stone. *Ci-gît Pierre Schneeberg,* says another. The language of the dead is, of course, French. This *Ci-gît* (Here lies) is a certificate of fidelity which the people sign for themselves. One does not lie to the dead.

The priest lingered a while before the stone on which are the words: *Ci-gît Louis Schmid, mort à* 89 *ans,* 1788–1886. Schmid lived through the Revolution, served under Napoleon the Great, witnessed the reigns of Louis XVIII., Charles X., the Second Republic, Napoleon III., the great catastrophe. He waited sixteen years longer, after which he died, full of years. They buried him here,

whereas the masters of the present carry away their dead to the other side of the Rhine, a sufficient evidence that they do not belong here. Now it is the dead who speak to the hearts of the people from the depths of their silence. Their dust has mingled with the dust of the soil, but their works live: the churches they built, the houses they shut up every night, the letters in the box up in the attic, and all the things that are neither seen nor heard, all that takes flight and floats and bathes the soul as the atmosphere bathes the body. The voice of the dead!

This morning, when the factory hooter was sounding — the night was passing away reluctantly, the lamp was still shedding a bright circle of light on kitchen-tables — workmen, standing on their doorsteps, burst into loud laughter, terminating in resolute *Gottverdammi.* There was a hum of talk. Neighbours called to each other from street and gable-windows. Arms were extended. Laughter broke out anew. Some one said:

"On the fir-tree, near the bridge."

Boys, half dressed, were already galloping across the fields. Old men in night-shirts, old women with their scanty locks hanging on their shoulders, shaded their eyes with their hands.

"Do you see it?"

"Yes indeed; there it is!"

It was the tenth year of the event. And the culprit had never been discovered. A few days after the departure of the conscripts, a red, white, and blue flag was discov-

ered at dawn floating over the landscape. On the schoolhouse lightning conductor, on the balcony of the police-station, last year on the ruined tower, this year on the giant fir-tree beyond the river. Blue, white, red: there it is beyond doubt! How it flaps in the wind! There is an irony in its flutterings, in its sudden drooping, as if it were giving up the struggle, followed by a leap which shakes it out again, with little tosses and quirks of merriment. Is it the effect of these three gay colours, an association of ideas? Every one feels lighter of foot, nimbler of tongue, more alert of mind.

All along the road, the workmen keep turning to look at it. The boys are swarming round the tree, jumping and laughing; then silence falls on them, for an official delegation approaches: a Custom-house officer, two policemen, the ranger, who has been dragged out of bed, yawning. The annual ceremony begins.

. . . The officials estimate the height of the tree. The ranger looks at the first policeman, who looks at the Custom-house officer. They compare their respective bulks. . . . Perhaps one of the boys? . . . The whole band take to their heels, even Ruprecht, the son of the bailiff, a thorough-bred *Schwob;* even Adolf Schorrer, whose father is the president of the Kriegerverein. The scandal has lasted too long. The policeman Taubenspeck unbuckles his sword, and lays his pistol and his helmet on the grass. He climbs from branch to branch — how they bend! — cautiously, feeling with his foot, breathing hard, and gazing skywards. His green uniform

shows light against the dark green of the tree. A branch, now another. How high it is! But a sense of duty overcomes all difficulties. Taubenspeck is at the top of the tree now. His neck shines; his square head stands out against the pale sky; he stretches out his hand. The flag shivers, hesitates, then drops into space. When a flag is bent on mischief, it plays all sorts of tricks before it comes to the ground. The red, white, and blue is so volatile! It soars in the air, drops, rises again, curves, loops the loop, recovers itself, plays the butterfly, frolics, and at last flutters to earth with the grace of a dead leaf. Armed authority hastens forward, seizes the delinquent, folds and refolds it so thoroughly that at last it is merely a red package that can be tucked under a tunic. . . . *Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein!*

But the incident will not be forgotten for a whole year. Enquiry after enquiry will be set on foot. Twenty marks will be offered to an informer. Action after action will be brought to tame the seditious population. There are so many carts without lamps, so many bicyclists who exceed the speed-limit, so many innkeepers who close five minutes too late.

Herr Kummel deplores "this stupid business." It even gave him a pretext for talking French throughout Reymond's German conversation lesson on the Thursday evening. He said:

"It is quite unimportant. . . . A boyish prank. But it offends the authorities, it casts a slur on a population of purely German stock. It excites the hotheads, of

which there are always a few. So it is foolish, and cowardly too, for the culprit will not come forward. The authorities are annoyed; they refuse a grant, decline to raise salaries, and the honest, loyal, faithful inhabitants have to pay the piper. Cowardly and foolish. The work of Wackes. The True Alsatians deplore it heartily."

Herr Kummel fumed indignantly.

One evening when Reymond had stayed to dinner with the Bohlers, there was some music after the meal. Jean played the violoncello, Charles Weiss the violin, Madame Bohler accompanied them at the piano. It was a pretty sight. The fair-haired mother, her face bathed in the rosy light of the shaded lamp; Jean, with knitted brows and a wrinkle in his forehead, too sentimental, perhaps, for Mozart; Charles, his hair falling over his eyes, absorbed in the limpid, delicate design of the work. Monsieur Bohler listened, smoking his pipe, his hands clasped behind his head, after the manner of a man of action giving himself up to a moment of emotion. After the concluding note of a trio of Schubert's, he spoke from his heart:

"Beautiful! Oh, those Germans, what musicians they are! But why to the devil didn't they stay on the other side of the Rhine?"

The conversation turned naturally to Alsace. Reymond described the incident of the flag.

"How characteristic of our masters!" said Monsieur

Bohler. "The thing is unimportant in itself, but so significant! There is a right way of dealing with such an incident: the flag might have been left to its fate, with an ironical salutation, till the wind carried it off to the devil. Instead of which, the police are called out, a foolish joke is treated as a conspiracy, long speeches are made, school boys are questioned, bribes are offered to informers, officials telephone to the *Kreisdirektor,* who telephones to Strasburg. . . . We pay dearly for this flag. Really, it is absurd of them to call us long-lost brothers; our minds are of different families. Fisticuffs and pin-pricks are our portion throughout the year. After all, it is irritating to be a servant in one's own house, a stranger in one's own country, to be harassed in our memories, lectured by pedants."

"Kummel said some priceless things to me on the subject."

Reymond at once regretted having spoken this name.

"Kummel? . . . That Pomeranian who came among us with all his possessions in a handkerchief, and now poisons the minds of our children! He poses as an Alsatian to those who don't know him, on the ground that he has been sucking our blood for twenty-eight years. Whereupon — and there are thousands and thousands like him — they assert that we have become reconciled to the annexation. Do the French know this? . . . He is an out-and-out Pomeranian, that Kummel, a licenced informer, a crafty pedagogue, the recognized leader of the clique. . . . He has given me a lot of trouble already.

If ever the school inspector comes down upon you, we shall know whom we have to thank. By the way, how long have you known this man Kummel? "

A formidable question. Reymond confessed, pleading extenuating circumstances. A certain coldness ensued.

"It is a pity; you should have consulted me."

"I can easily stop the lessons."

"Not on any account. He would have his revenge. You have begun, so you must go on. I know my man. Of course, you must never speak of your pupils or of us to him. Good heavens! put yourself in our place. What would you say if, on the plea that before the time of William Tell you belonged to some one or the other, they annexed a piece of your beautiful Switzerland? If the usurper ordered your compatriots, ground under his heel: Think this, don't say that, shout *Hoch!* hang out flags; if they were suspected, treated as inferiors, persecuted as criminals for remaining faithful to their country, would you not applaud them for behaving as we do? "

"Papa, Alsace will be taken back," said René.

"When? . . . Ah! let us talk of something else, and live our little life."

Wrapped in a cloud of smoke, Monsieur Bohler sat silent for the rest of the evening.

Let us live our little life! Reymond tried his best to do so. Indeed, there was nothing else to be done.

Twice a day the tutor went to the factory. The road

ran between hedges, crossed the railway and then skirted the mountain. To the right lay the whole breadth of the valley — the valley with its meadows, its orchards, its gardens, its river fringed with alders; beyond, the boldly undulating hills, roads climbing courageously upward, copses, bare spaces where the goats, in spite of the advance of winter, still find something to crop. From a distance these goats look like white stones laid upon the yellowing pastures. Near the bridge there are nearly always basket-makers, crouching round a cart covered with a tarpaulin. Children with greasy locks, often quite naked, keep watch over a knock-kneed horse which snuffs the tufts of faded grass, its lips drawn back over its blackened teeth. Crossing the river, Reymond pushes open the iron gate. The porter greets him from the back of his lodge.

In the schoolroom he finds Jean and René. They rise respectful: "Good-morning, Monsieur." They read, translate, recite a fable, work out problems, find countries and cities upon the map. How the hours fly! It is the drone of the machine which helps you, carries you along.

Reymond is on the road again. The gipsies are still there, the naked children, the horse, the blear-eyed dog. He nearly always has to wait a few minutes at the level crossing, until the little train comes clattering along. Heads look out at him from the carriage windows. In his workroom, the stove burns cosily. Seven o'clock. Good-evening, gentlemen. *Mahlzeit.* Always the two

tables, the usual rites, the same distance. Coquart tells stories. Reymond lauds the Swiss army. The Alsatians pass from French to *patois*, from *patois* to French. They say what they wish to say, and nothing more. Cigars are lighted, there is a little more conversation. Then his own warm room, the newspaper, books. And then sometimes the moonbeams glance off the roofs, sometimes the rain patters. Ten o'clock, curfew! Jacob grumbles on the other side of the wall, old Schmoler chants his prayer, Jacobine coughs; their daughters, after double-locking the door below, mount the creaking stairs. Bedtime. The little train passes again, and whistles, no one knows why. Reymond falls asleep.

This monotonous life is a pleasant one. It rocks and soothes the soul. Sunday is an oasis in the greyness of the week. The bells ring; people coming back from Mass show their fine clothes — a green tie, a hat wreathed with jonquils; they gossip interminably on their doorsteps, their gilt-edged prayer-books in their hands. In the afternoon the geese, alarmed by the hooters of motor-cars, make off in Indian file down a side-street, moving with great dignity, their beaks uplifted. The inhabitants take walks, go to see their friends in neighbouring villages. The policeman Taubenspeck also takes a walk. He smokes a cigar and wears white gloves. By his side walks his wife, and they are followed by their children, whose names Hansi has told us: Irmentrude, Hildegarde, Elsa, Hulda, Wilhelm, Siegfried, Karlchen and Hanschen . . . and no doubt this is not the last of the clan. . . .

The belfry marks the hours. The geese return by the side-street, and youths pass, arm-in-arm with their betrothed. Night. The lamps are lighted. Nothing is to be heard now but the shoemaker Herzog's concertina, and the songs of the drinkers sitting in the Golden Cask: *Qu'elle est belle, la terre d'Alsace!*

As weeks follow weeks, the stranger begins to understand a country. Slowly, its soul stands revealed. It is in what one sees, in what one divines. It is in the *patois,* in the forest depths, in the gestures, in the homesick yearning of the songs, in the All Saints procession, in the memories unspoken, in the sentiments concealed. What can force do against feeling?

Play your concertina, shoemaker Herzog; drinkers at the Golden Cask, sing: *Qu'elle est belle la terre d'Alsace!* And thou, ringer, spit on thy palms at the close of this Sabbath day, and sound the curfew.

IV

A JANUARY night, and snowfall. He who has never lived in Alsace, in a village of one of the Vosges valleys, cannot imagine the charm of looking out on waking into a snow-clad world. On all the slanting roofs, on the ridges of the chimneys, even on the weathercock, the mantle of winter has been spread. It lies like a thickly padded roll along the tops of fences, it crowns the pot-bellied water-god of the fountain, the stork's empty nest, the Christ on the churchyard cross. The heights, the forests, all the hills which die away into the plain, all the sinuous valleys, have donned a bridal gown shot with pink, and with blue, a deep blue, almost black, the glory of the mountain.

Under the snow, the mountain is terrible in its icy solitude. All is white, down to the lowest depths of the abyss. The Jura shivers, an austere wall stretching from north to south, bristling with the dark halberds of pine-trees and assailed by the north wind. The Vosges, however, remain winsome and human, with their clumps of broom, their birches and beeches, their laburnums; and here, accordingly, the snow is more playful in its dealings, turning a fir-tree into a shining lance-head, a laburnum into a dome, a birch into a Gothic arch, a clump of broom into a hedgehog powdered with hoar-frost.

Then there are also the colours of the close ranks of tree-trunks, the sunlit bark of pines, the greenish bark of the laburnum, the whitish bark of the birches, the russet foliage of the beeches; and all around them the bluish-white of the snow, over which steals the voice of bells, for there is always a sound of bells in every Alsatian day.

Little boys, their red caps pulled down over their ears, climb the slope, harnessed to a sleigh with two seats. How the red caps fly along the smooth track! Their shouts ring out on the crisp air.

On a certain Sunday afternoon every one seemed to be taking part in the sport: Fritz, the shoemaker's apprentice, who guided his sleigh lying flat on his stomach, and playing his mouth-organ; and Bader, and Schramm, and Spinner, and Becker, and Klipfel, and a great many others, lads and their lasses, the buxom, apple-cheeked girls, who settle down upon the knees that are offered them without much coyness. But the maiden who attracted most attention was Suzanne Weiss, the sister of one of Reymond's pupils, a joyous, laughing apparition, whose fair complexion against the whiteness of the snow made her look like a wild-rose blooming out of season.

. . . Mademoiselle Suzanne! Voices took on caressing tones when they spoke of her. Coquart turned to look after her when he met her. Reymond thought the valley enchanting after he had greeted her. Even Kraut, the sexagenarian widowed bureaucrat, looked at her like a dog seated before a closed door. Even Justice Döring found his way regularly past the Weisses' windows, but-

toned up in an interminable frock-coat, a Christmas rose in his button-hole, his moustache twisted up to his nostrils, a silver-headed cane in his hand.

Jean and René, André Berger, Emile Zumbach, Charles Weiss, their sisters and cousins, enjoyed the sport wholeheartedly. All these people, amidst a chorus of "Herr Je's" and "Jesus Maria's," by which the girls sitting on the knees of the boys commended their souls to God, flew down the incline to the bridge, where stood those who would not trust their dignity to the whims of a sleigh; the muffled-up mammas, the rheumatic papas, the old men smoking their pipes silently, the leading manufacturers, and also Kraut, Kummel, and Justice Döring, forming a solemn group.

The only one of the notables who was taking part in the sport was Monsieur Weiss, and he was lugeing as enthusiastically as any woodman. This man never did anything like other people. His legs cased in blue gaiters, his fur cap pulled over his face till all that was to be seen of it was a straw-coloured beard, his broad shoulders and flowing artist's cravat rising above the crowd, he radiated gaiety.

This self-made Alsatian felt himself surrounded by respectful affection. Papa Weiss was not proud, and he was as good as a slice of *Kougelhopf*. How many who were behindhand with their rents he had helped! How many poor devils he had snatched from the claws of money-lenders! By his virtuous example and his outspoken language, this man upheld national traditions,

A born leader. All that was essentially local, genuinely Alsatian was warmly supported by Victor Weiss. To a highly placed personage who once, during a discussion, reminded him that he was a German citizen, he replied: "Pardon me. I am an Alsatian citizen and a German subject. They are not quite the same thing." This speech was much quoted in Friedensbach.

Seated on his luge, his pipe in his mouth, Weiss swept along, towed by another sleigh in which his daughter and his two sons had installed themselves, with Reymond as pilot. Intoxicated by the rapid motion, they felt themselves the lords of the dazzling landscape. But disaster was before them. As Kraut, Kummel, and Döring were crossing the frozen track, the widower, whose heels slipped under him, caught at the arms of his companions. The next moment the sleigh scattered the distressful group! A permutation of human values! For a moment the pedagogue stood on his head, his spine contracted with anguish, his heels turned up to the stars. Justice Döring was spinning round on his posterior like a top; as to Kraut, he lay with his beard flat on the snow, his scanty locks bristling, his ten fingers clutching the ice, rousing the echoes with his cries of *Was!* (What!)

A laugh burst from the crowd. Kraut got up, rubbed his back ruefully, and repeated his *Was!* Kummel, who had also risen, shook his head mournfully. The offensive fell to the share of Justice Döring, whose forehead, streaked with purple veins, dilated, short-sighted eyes, and the scars which had suddenly appeared on the deadly

whiteness of his face, revealed an unusual degree of fury.

"Keep calm, and say very little," whispered Weiss to Reymond. "If things become unpleasant, count on me."

The Justice approached obliquely. The boors had dared to laugh. The dignity of the magistracy must be vindicated. Nevertheless, in presence of Mademoiselle Weiss, who was looking at him with a certain degree of fear, Döring's fury was transformed into gallantry. Clicking his heels together, he bowed. Then, in excellent French, but with a slight accent, he said:

"I hope you, at any rate, were not hurt, Mademoiselle?"

"And you, Monsieur?" replied the young girl, with a show of solicitude.

"Oh! nothing to speak of. If you are not hurt, then all is well."

"Yes, that's the main thing," added Kraut.

The Justice turned to Reymond. He eyed him as one eyes a man to decide whether he is *satisfactionsfähig*. Then, in his official voice:

"One question, Monsieur. Was this accident intentional on your part?"

Reymond looked up.

"Intentional? You and those two gentlemen were in the very middle of the track! I think that question would come better from me to you. I may point out to you that we very nearly crashed into that tree."

Playing a losing game handsomely, the Judge bowed again. Then, in measured tones:

"In that case, it is my business to apologize. Had the reverse been the case, the consequences might have been serious. As it is, we must look upon the accident as the result of a vexatious concatenation of circumstances. This was what I wanted to prove. Mademoiselle, gentlemen, I have the honour . . ."

For the third time the heels clicked together. For the third time the magistrate bowed. Drawn up side by side at the edge of the road, their feet turned in, Kraut and Kummel did their best to imitate this hieratic salutation. Walking slowly and holding themselves very erect, the three men went off.

When they had disappeared, Weiss uttered a mighty laugh, holding out both hands to Reymond.

"Monsieur, you must sup with us. No thanks! I owe you one of the greatest pleasures of my life, perhaps the greatest. That Kraut clasping an icicle to his heart, that Kummel standing on his head, that Döring transformed into a dancing dervish. It was really delightful!"

"Priceless, priceless!" cried the pupils with great enthusiasm.

A woodman with a matted beard like lichen detached himself from the crowd, and held out his hand to Reymond, explaining something in *patois*.

"What does he say?"

"He is thanking you. Last Friday the Justice fined him fifty marks as a result of an accusation by the ranger. So he is thanking you. He calls the accident his revenge.

So now let us go home. Our day has not been wasted."

On the way, Weiss teased his daughter.

"We have to thank you for this honeyed solution. Döring positively cooed."

Suzanne laughed. "Poor man! He was really quite touching."

"That's right, pity him. We know what pity is akin to."

"Don't be afraid. I think I should prefer Kraut. He yearns so for affection."

What a feast! And what merriment! Every one laughed on the slightest pretext — Monsieur Weiss in great gusts, Madame Weiss in a cascade, Suzanne in ripples, Charles in gurgles, Mariette after the manner of little girls of six, her nose buried in her table-napkin. Those Weisses! They expanded without mystery, without formula or stock phrases, or precautions, just as Nature prompted them. Scarcely had a peal of laughter subsided when Weiss said:

"Did you notice how tall Kummel looked, standing on his head? . . . And his pink socks! . . . I should never have suspected him of being such a dandy!"

Meanwhile every one did justice to the meal.

"Come, Monsieur Reymond, you are not taking anything," said Madame Weiss, with her maternal smile.

"No more, thank you."

It was too late. The plate was full. He had to begin again. The pleasant warmth, the dresser loaded with pewter-plates, crudely coloured bowls, tureens of *foie-*

gras, long-necked bottles, the savoury steam that rose to the coffered ceiling, all invited festivity. And Madame Weiss repeated smilingly:

"You are not helping yourself."

"Come now, mamma," said Suzanne at last, a little bit ashamed.

They passed into the drawing-room, a characteristically Weissian apartment, original to the verge of comicality; here stood a spinning-wheel, there a stuffed stork beside a sheaf of bulrushes; there were great arm-chairs, exquisite engravings, and many other pleasant things, making up a very harmonious whole by reason of a kind of good-natured cosiness, a somewhat crude fancy. As soon as they entered the room, the father caught his little girl by the hands, and began to dance an improvised *bourrée,* singing:

"Cigogn', cigogn' t'as de la chance,
Tous les ans tu passes en France,
Cigogn', cigogn', rapport' nous
Dans ton bec un p'tit pioupiou. . . ."

[Stork, stork, how lucky you are. You go to France every year. Stork, stork, bring us back a little French soldier in your beak.]

Throwing her head back, the child laughed delightedly. After this she asked for a sad story.

"Which one? The Black Uhlan?"

"Oh, yes!"

"Well, now we must sit very still."

"Quand la nuit descend
Fermons les persiennes,

Car le vieux uhlan
Fait souvent des siennes."

[When night falls, let us close the shutters, for the old Uhlan will be playing his tricks.]

"Shall I go on?"

"Oh, yes!" cried the child, with a shudder.

"Les petits gourmands
Crac! dans sa besace,
Les petits enfants
Les enfants d'Alsace."

[He seizes the little gluttons, and stuffs them into his pouch, the little children, the children of Alsace.]

"Is that enough?"

Marianne was holding her breath, awestruck.

"More?"

"Bismarck, chez le diable,
Il n'a plus de dents,
Trouve délectable . . ."

[Bismarck is with the devil. He has no teeth left, so he appreciates . . .]

The child began to cry, throwing herself into her father's arms.

"No, not about Bismarck! . . . not about Bismarck!"

"Little goose! Look at your father. Do you think he is afraid of Bismarck? . . . Suzanne, play us something! Something lively. And you, Monsieur Reymond, have a glass of kirsch? It's good stuff, from my own orchard."

While his daughter was playing a victorious march, more noisy than melodious, Weiss drew Reymond into a window recess, and began:

"Confess that you think me a little cracked. . . . Talking of Bismarck to a child of six! But one cannot begin too early to talk to them. . . . Everything is lawful for those who have been robbed of their country. And what a country! . . . No one will ever know the kind of lives we lead here. The Alsatian has a broad chest. He needs to breathe deeply, to express his feelings, to dance when his heart is merry — in short, to be himself. Now, for forty years, we have been stifling. Espionage, denunciations, suspicions, vexations, annoyances, petty regulations, sneers, fines, imprisonment, persecutions, expulsions — this is the portion of the proudest people in the world. When a man has to be keeping watch over himself perpetually, holding his tongue, clenching his fist in his pocket, living bent double, so to speak, his heart on an anvil, he breaks loose in the bosom of his family!

"As a Swiss, Monsieur Reymond, you *ought*, indeed you *ought* to understand and love us. People say sometimes: liberty is but a word. Only those who have lost it know what it is. We have paid dearly for our state of slavery. That photograph over the piano, that handsome fellow, was my eldest son Jacques. He died in garrison, at the age of twenty-one. If I told you what they did to him, you would not believe me. Well, in spite of this, they will have our two others. The elder boy is at Strasburg University. I mean them to stay in Alsace. Our brave people must have leaders. If the middle classes abandon them, all will be lost.

"I know that Bohler is going to send his boys to France. I do not blame him. We want some of our stock, too, beyond the Vosges, to tell what we are suffering, to blow upon the embers. . . . My poor boy! It is hard to bear! Oh! you mustn't think that I am so stupid as to hate the Germans on principle. I know their fine qualities. They are industrious, disciplined, tenacious. If force is the last word in life, they are even a great people. But impartiality is a forbidden luxury to us Alsatians. We must only think of one thing: they have taken our country, they trample upon it, they keep it by the power of the mailed first. Credulous, like all those who are puffed up with pride, they imagine that they will bring us along in a leash from fraternity to feudality. If we were to agree to this, we should be cowards, the most despicable of all cowards. We should admit tacitly that a nation is a flock which the master leads whither he will by means of the whip.

"Ah! they build us railway-stations, post offices, and schools, and they cry out at our ingratitude because they cannot buy our souls! And they frown, and brandish the whip! A whip for the Alsatians! For us, the sons of the free towns, of the land which made the Revolution; for us, who lived through the Napoleonic epic, sword in hand; for us who fought at Sebastopol, at Solferino. . . . The whip for us!"

Weiss's voice broke. He paused. Then he repeated once more: "The whip!"

An attempt, however involuntary, to upset the equi-

librium of Imperial functionaries may not be made with impunity.

René Bohler's voice, muted by the snorting of machinery, was extolling the beauty of Calypso, when the old servant knocked at the door and pronounced words that struck a chill to the hearts of master and pupils:

"The Inspector of Schools."

He entered the room forthwith. What struck them first was a head like a pensive vulture's, an enormously long body, and very large feet. Reymond, Jean, and René rose and bowed respectfully. The tutor then introduced himself and his pupils in halting German.

"Are you also their German teacher?" asked the Inspector in French. And he wrinkled his nose, which gave his spectacles a singular up-and-down movement and made his cheeks, bristling with short, stiff hairs, quiver.

"No, Monsieur."

"Then, who teaches them German, may I ask?"

"A lady . . ."

"Ah! . . . A lady! A tutor for French, a lady for German. And what is the name of this lady?"

"Mademoiselle Wahler."

"Where does she live?"

"At Mulhouse."

"Ah! I know that this lady also gives French lessons in that centre of learning, Mulhouse. The dual culture! the great Alsatian idea! We graduates of German Universities cannot aspire to knowledge which exhausts the possibilities of our German culture, but Mademoiselle

Wahler, it seems, assimilates the two cultures. . . . I congratulate this lady on her brilliant capabilities."

Delighted at having winged so many shafts of irony, the Inspector ceased to wrinkle his nose, a smile flashed from his green eyes, and he sat down. After a rapid glance at surrounding objects — oh! oh! a map of France, a statuette of Jeanne d'Arc, some little tricolour flags on the walls, souvenirs of a Fourteenth of July festival — he came back to his mother-tongue with ponderous geniality.

"Today we will be content with a short examination in history and geography. These are touchstones. I see on this table books by Monsieur Seignobos, by Monsieur Gallouédec, and others by my colleagues of the Great Nation. I have no doubt that they contain much excellent and accurate information touching our Alsace, for instance, and our Imperial colonies. . . . Now, you, my young friend, shall tell me something about Togoland. Speak, young man: your servant is all attention."

Jean opened his mouth twice, and uttered a vague sound.

"Very good," said the Inspector, with a loud laugh. "Quite right so far. What next? "

"Togoland is a German colony . . . a German colony . . . very prosperous . . . a fine colony . . . in Africa."

"I have suddenly forgotten my French, young man. Kindly translate that into German."

Jean obeyed.

"Good. I almost understood what you said. But I should like a few additional details. The date of conquest, the principal towns, rivers, situation, flora and fauna, the annual budget, etc., etc.—a great many things!"

"There are no large towns. . . . The rivers dry up in the summer. . . . The productions are cocoa, coffee, and cotton. . . . There are giraffes and elephants."

Jean raised his eyebrows to indicate that he had exhausted the sum of his knowledge.

The Inspector seemed depressed.

"When a person lives in Germany, my young friend, under the protection of German might, he should show some gratitude. It is his duty to take an interest in the German colonies, in the elements of that German wealth by which you benefit so enormously in Alsace. Now, I am quite sure that you know by heart the names of the eighty-six departments of France, and of two or three hundred towns, the most important of which is inferior to Friedensbach in intellectual and industrial life. . . . The other pupil shall answer a question in history. Tell me the names and principal achievements of the first six Electors of Brandenburg."

René threw himself boldly into the breach.

"Albert the Bear, Otto the Fowler . . . Louis the German. . . . No; that's wrong . . . and then . . . and then . . ."

"That will do."

But René assumed the offensive.

"Monsieur, I know the history of Germany. . . . About the House of Saxony, the House of Franconia, the quarrel concerning Investitures, the Golden Bull . . ."

The Inspector closed his green eyes, shook his head, and began wrinkling his nose again.

"My young friend, when I ask for the names of the first six Electors of Brandenburg, I don't want a discourse on the Golden Bull. German pupils form the habit of answering a question in the most exact and absolute manner. We call such a habit the discipline of the mind. . . . I will wish you good day, Monsieur Reymond."

The three looked at each other dumbfounded. Disaster! Jean seized an atlas, René looked up a list of sovereigns. The one exclaimed:

"What a shame to catch me with Togoland, when I know the names of all the German principalities!"

The other protested:

"And I know the names of all the Hapsburgs and Hohenstauffens . . . and heaps of other things. And I should have astonished him with the Golden Bull."

Reymond said nothing; he foresaw trouble. It was with an effort that he at last exhorted them:

"Go on with Calypso again."

When Monsieur Bohler was informed of the adventure, he opined, like a man of sense, that there was nothing to be done, and that they must await further developments.

These were soon forthcoming in the shape of a com-

minatory letter. The Inspector deplored the ignorance of the culprits "in geographical and historical studies, the touchstones of a solid practical education. Moreover, their knowledge of our national tongue leaves much to be desired. To acquire the knowledge indicated in the schedules it will be necessary to apply to a man whose profession familiarizes him with the said schedules and their requirements."

Monsieur Bohler pondered the terms of this letter, tapping the table nervously with one finger.

"There is some plot behind this; a Kummel or some spy of the same sort is at the bottom of it. . . . Evidently, they want Mademoiselle Wahler's head! The worthy old soul teaches my boys German, but she also teaches dozens of Mulhouse urchins French. For the last thirty years she has done more to maintain French influence in Alsace than all the fine speakers. They know this, and they want to starve her. . . . As to you, Monsieur Reymond, I think we shall be able to arrange matters. They won't go any further. Our factory subsidizes various associations, courses of instruction for apprentices, etc. Those who hold weapons are respected. But where are we to find a German professor?"

"I can only think of one," replied Madame Bohler. "We should be left in peace then."

"Who is your man?"

"Kummel himself. Four hours of private tuition a week would be a pleasant addition to his salary. He would think it his mission to Germanize our boys, and,

with this end in view, he would refrain from denouncing us. Really, Kummel is our fate. He will be our lightning-conductor."

"No. I won't have the cur in my house at any price. Still less will I send my boys to his."

"How would it be to let him give the lessons in my rooms, Monsieur?" proposed Reymond. "I could then be present at them."

"That's an idea, and a very good one. It's no use kicking against the pricks. I agree. Will you make the proposal to the pedagogue on my behalf? I should prefer to have no direct dealings with him. . . . But now tell me just what the Inspector said to you?"

There was a good deal of laughter about Jean's elephants and giraffes and René's Golden Bull.

"Luckily for us," said Madame Bohler, "these worthy Germanizers are not very dexterous. If they were, we should be lost! Imagine an Inspector who would talk pleasantly to children, forgetting for a moment that he is a German and showing himself as a man, quite simply; telling them stories about Togoland, congratulating them on what they know instead of ridiculing them. But this is not their way. They come as missionaries, bringing culture, science, art. They bring their German might to bear upon everything. They have no conception of tact. This Inspector evidently knows — indeed, they know everything — that my husband's two brothers were killed in 1870. So, of course, he talks of 'our Alsace' to the nephews of those dead men. This enrages the boys

beyond expression. But these methods are the outcome of the German mind. The conqueror is irresistible; he is endowed with every grace, from the mere fact that he is the conqueror, and this even when he instals himself in the house of his victim. His irony is but another attraction added to all the rest.

"Let us thank God for having made them what they are," said Monsieur Bohler. "If they had combined tact, respect for others, and delicate feeling, with their genius for organization, the whole world would have been at their feet."

After the snow came a heavy black rain. The gutters overflowed. The water lay in pools amidst the slimy mud. A yellow fog hung over the hill-tops and mingled with the smoke from the factories. Umbrellas glistened along the road; the workmen plodded along, their coat-collars turned up.

"A wet day," said one.

"So much the better," replied another; "it couldn't be too wet today."

Before the town-hall and the police-station figures were moving about in the gloaming. Thick necks and uplifted arms were distinguishable. The dim light and the persistent rain gave a dismal air to the silent preparations. For a moment the flags floated out from their standards. Presently, weighed down by the rain, they fell into a sullen mass, showing only the black.

And the bells of the valley were ringing. They sounded dull and hollow. What could those poor bells

say? They speak in the voices given them by men. Reymond's heart ached for all the dead sleeping under the earth of battlefields, for all the living shut up in their houses. The bells of Thann, of Mulhouse, of Sainte-Odile, of Strasburg, of Metz, the bells of all the villages in the upper valleys of the Vosges, swinging to tell men that the morrow would be the birthday of the Conqueror. And the music was unspeakably sad. The joy-bells seemed to be ringing a knell, for a lie lay heavy on the souls of those who were forced to pull the ropes.

"What would you say," thought Reymond, sitting in a corner of his room in the dark, "if the bells of Basle, Zurich, Berne, Geneva, and of your own Cathedral of Lausanne, which have so often pealed on the red-letter days of your happy fatherland, should some evening ring to celebrate the victory of the foreigner? If the dead were lying in the churchyards by thousands, men who had gone down into the land of shadows for the salvation of their country, but in vain! The flag you love is furled. It is hidden in an attic. Another floats in its place. The tramp of the invader echoes from the pavement of the streets. Torches flare. Military bands, with their sonorous brasses, parade the insolent joy of the alien whose claws are planted in the very heart of your country."

From the Vosges to the Rhine, from Luxemburg to Switzerland, in the birthplace of Kléber and of Rapp, the bells rang on until the thick darkness came down upon the roofs.

The next day it was still raining. Spörrmann the policeman made an early round. . . . A flag on the balcony of the town-hall, another on the balcony of the Justice, another at Kraut's house, another at Kummel's, another at Maus the merchant's, another at the bailiff's, another at the ranger's, another at the station-master's. Ten red, white, and black flags in all, as there were last year, and as there had been as far back as he could remember, counting his own and that of his colleague, Taubenspeck. He made a note of it, for statistical purposes. And nine red-and-white flags at the rural policeman's house, at the house of Kummel's colleague, on the fronts of the seven *Wirtschaften.* Elsewhere, or rather everywhere else, nothing was to be seen but closely drawn curtains. Nineteen flags! . . . Policeman Spörrmann indulged in a dream. He longed to bring the total up to twenty. Next year, perhaps, if Karl is really applying for an innkeeper's licence . . .

The chimneys belch out smoke. The machines whirr and buzz. The river runs swiftly over its white pebbles. The day is like all other days, save in the school. The children cannot escape. Willingly or unwillingly, they have to swallow what others refuse. Sent to ramble in the forest, they have gathered holly, ivy, and little branches of fir, with which they will presently bedeck a niche. . . . Now, drawn up in procession behind the umbrella of Schoolmaster Kummel, who is arrayed in a frock-coat and a tall hat, they go to the town-hall to

fetch the plaster bust of the Emperor with the strongly marked forehead, the severe eyes, the hard mouth, and the fierce moustaches, accentuated by the dust which has gathered for a year on the august effigy. . . . The bust is duly installed. Kummel rises. He speaks of God, of the Emperor, of the Emperor and God. He speaks of the colonies. He speaks of the eight millions of German soldiers. He speaks of the influence of Germany in the world, of all she still has to do in order to purify the world of the sins which are consuming it like a leprosy. Armed with a switch, he points out on the map the course of German steamers on the blue oceans. He shows in Brazil, in Argentina, in Nicaragua, in China, everywhere, a hundred youthful Germanies in process of formation. It is the will of God! With mystic fervour he enlarges on the gratitude of Alsace, her joy in belonging to the regal nation, of the incense smoking upon her altars and rising to the thrones of God and the Emperor, the Emperor and God.

The grandsons of those who died for France listen to his words. These innocents, the biggest of whom is hardly higher than a man's knee, gaze at him open-mouthed. Then Kummel turns to the bust, to which he bows reverentially. And thrice, raising his arms to heaven, his eyes gleaming, his long body quivering, he shouts to the ceiling: *Hoch! hoch! hoch!* . . . The children, who think this very amusing, and love a noise, echo him loudly: *Hoch! hoch! hoch!* The boys group

themselves at a given sign. Standing in a semicircle round the bust, cap in hand, they chant: *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles!* . . .

The rites are over. The boys are dismissed. And as they are now free to do what they please, they march along, stamping on the ground, and throwing their caps into the air, they sing in deafening chorus:

Wenn der Kater nicht haarig ist
Fängt er keine Mäuse. . . .

This is more spontaneous than the *Deutschland über Alles!*

Wrapped in a number of the *Strassburger Post*, the Imperial bust is carried by Kummel to the inn, *Zum weissen Lamm.*

Shortly afterwards, the procession starts from the railway-station: all the officials of Friedensbach, and in addition the Customs officers, rangers, postmen, rural policemen and clerks of the neighbourhood, the presidents, vice-presidents, and treasurers of the *Kriegervereine* or military associations: exactly forty-one frock-coats, forty-one tall hats, and forty-one umbrellas. Kraut, Kummel, and Döring are there, of course. On their breasts are medals enough to decorate a division. In front of the frock-coats — *cedant togæ armis* — march those who have some sort of right to wear a uniform: officers of the Reserve, retired officers of the Reserve, privy councillors and very privy councillors, plumes, epaulettes, spurs, boots, gold, shoulder-knots, paunches

severely held in by belts buckled to the last hole. At the head of the procession, six musicians lent by a regimental band. In short, a complete mobilization of missionaries of the national Idea. Strength of conviction gives a certain grandeur to these men. They hold a cure of souls. They are the priests of a religion. The chief has ordered them to advance . . . and they advance. Outposts of *Deutschtum* in a rebel land, or rather in a land perverted by foreign influences, it is their task to impose Truth. Sentiment is but weakness, the worship of the past but perversity and disease.

You laugh, you who have not seen them. You shrug your shoulders. You talk of a grotesque caricature, of absurd exaggeration. . . . Come, I say to you peaceful dwellers in a free country, draw aside the curtain and look; see here, in the rain, the swing of those forty frock-coats, the swords, the helmets, but, above all, the foreheads, the jaws, the bristling moustaches, the gloved fists, the furious eyes that note the absence of flags on the house-fronts, the haughtiness of the tread, the scorn in the shoulders, the infallibility of the chests, the doctrine that seems to ooze from every pore: "We are the masters. We will break down all resistance. God has given us our right, the Emperor has given us our orders."

When you have seen such a Pan-Germanist parade in a humble Alsatian country town you will say: "Yes, it is lamentable, but, after all, you must acknowledge the indisputable virtues of these men."

"Yes," a Victor Weiss will reply, "they are perfect.

All we complain of is that they have been sitting on our hearts for forty years, and that they are heavy! "

What a banquet! What libations! At intervals a stentorian chorus. Then a succession of *Hochs!* . . . An orator rises. From the street we can only see his outstretched hands, the movement of his jaws, his assertive paunch. What is he saying? . . . The *Hochs!* are reiterated with savage energy. Another song. Now they are laughing, and as the windows have been opened to let out the tobacco-smoke, this post-prandial laughter echoes in the empty street. The merchant Maus, one of the "rallied," raises his glass higher than the others. They congratulate him. The idea is gaining ground. . . . *Deutschland über Alles!*

Policeman Taubenspeck little knows that some rascals, taking advantage of this patriotic delirium, have got hold of his white tom-cat and have painted its head blue and its tail red, so that when he returns to his home in the small hours he will find a tricoloured flag on his doorstep! . . . But Taubenspeck has no forebodings. He is too busy lifting his glass. And the tricoloured cat is patient. It will wait.

Reymond had paid a visit to the old Schmolers. The tall clock ticked sedately in the warm room, every slow movement seeming about to be its last. . . . The sounds of the festival echoed faintly in this quiet nook. After an outburst of stamping and cheering, old Jacobine trembled.

"Do you think, Monsieur, that they are getting ready

for another war, as some people say? Oh! war! war! . . . We have had enough of it in Alsace! Ever since there has been a France and a Germany they have been fighting here, on the backs of us poor folks. My mother, for instance — we need not go further back than that — saw the Cossacks in Friedensbach, in the time of the great Napoleon. How often she has told us the story! Thump! One evening some one was kicking the door, that very door you open every night. . . . Lord, it was the Cossacks! And they were hungry, and so ugly, dirty and black as the bottom of a saucepan. My mother hastened to bring them a soup-tureen full of potatoes. Her hand trembled as she stood among these savages armed with lances, grimacing like devils. The handle slipped, the tureen crashed to the ground, and the contents lay on the road in the mud. Well, Monsieur, those ten Cossacks sprang from their horses, knelt down, gathered up the soup and the potatoes from the dirt and manure, gobbled them up, jumped into their saddles again, gave a shout and a laugh, and galloped away. My mother was lucky to get off so cheaply. . . . In other places they set fire to the houses and stabbed the peasants.

"I myself saw Strasburg burning in 1870. I was in service in a village fifteen kilometres away. Every night bombs burst with a flash, just like lightning, and we heard the noise some time afterwards. At last one night we saw fire. All the sky was red, red, as far as the eye could reach. I watched it for a minute from my bedroom window. And then I couldn't look any longer.

I hid my face in my handkerchief and cried. And I could still see the red through the handkerchief. Yes, indeed, we know something of war in Alsace. There was a field hospital at my sister's house near Wissembourg. And they buried thirty legs and even more arms behind the lilacs in her garden. Oh! war! Just listen, how they are shouting! War! My husband, too, has seen it; he even took part in it."

Madame Vogel and her sister came in. They sat down, their hands on their knees.

"Yes, indeed; I served all through the Metz campaign. . . . They talk of victories, but we were betrayed. How we marched and fought for days and nights together! What bombardments! What masses of dead! And the wounded! How they screamed! When we charged, we jumped into pools of blood. When we had to retreat, we wept with rage. In the evening the sky was all red, as at Strasburg. Blood, above and below! . . . I saw a ditch with forty-seven dead men in it, and on the top was my best friend, staring at me with wide-open eyes. Such horrors! And then I was a prisoner. And when I came home, they were here, just as they have been ever since. The soil is good, life is easy. . . . Corn, hops, vines. . . . Those who find a good thing stick to it."

Jacob listened to these tales, seated on the bench by the stove. Suddenly he said:

"Grandfather, shall we fight the Germans again?"

"Be quiet, child," said his mother. "You do not

know what war is. All that is over, fortunately."

"No!" protested the boy; "once more, and then never again."

The grandfather smiled.

"You see, it's in their blood."

All night the rain that lashed the window-panes mingled its murmurs with the *Hochs!* At dawn uncertain footsteps, wandering frock-coats, decorations, and flushed faces, confronted the storm. Leaving the merchant Maus to address a martial harangue to the trunk of a plane-tree, Taubenspeck leant over the basin of the fountain, "breathing out threatenings and slaughters" as he washed his tom-cat, held by two functionaries who had laid their tall hats on the stone margin.

Herzog the shoemaker, disturbed in his sleep, grumbled:

"Back to your kennels, Imperial hogsheads!" And this was the epilogue of the feast.

The next day, when Kummel opened the door himself to Reymond, his eyelids were still swollen, his features drawn, his complexion mottled. This did not prevent him, however, a few minutes later, from catching a new French idiom on the wing, as it were.

"Very good; an excellent Gallicism that. Allow me to make a note of it."

As always, the lesson was prolonged into a conversation. Kummel asked for advice.

"Faithful to our notions of culture, Monsieur, I read

the best French authors. That is the difference between us and the French; they know nothing of our writers; we know all of theirs. This is necessary for those who intend to gain the victory. During the last few months I have studied a novel by Loti, one by Anatole France, one by Bourget, and one by Prévost, just a characteristic work of each, enough for my catalogue. It is a literature for artists, the latest flowers at the moment when one goes to gather them. Once gathered, there is nothing left. No; it is not a literature that inspires energy, braces one for conflict. However, I read it. Culture requires that I should. Can you recommend me some other author who is considered representative of French mentality? "

Reymond was aghast! Kummel, booted and spurred, ranging the parterres of France! He controlled himself:

"You should read the complete works of Stéphane Mallarmé. They are rather difficult; the thought is sometimes elusive, but with a good dictionary you will be able to follow him."

"Thank you. I will make a note of it. Two l's in Mallarmé? Thank you. By the way, do you consider my accent very bad? "

"Not at all. . . . It is a little hard, a little guttural, but you articulate well."

"That is the result of our excellent methods. In our teachers' colleges we learn intuitively and phonetically. That is the German method. Yes, here again the French might take a lesson from us. . . ."

"No doubt. . . . And what about your banquet? Was it interesting?"

"Magnificent! . . . The merchant Maus, who is a thoroughbred Alsatian, made a remarkable speech. Like all thinking men, he has gradually come round to the German point of view. He realizes our irresistible strength. He has succeeded in throwing off sentiment, and has rallied to our culture whole-heartedly. We are incontestably, are we not, the people destined to direct, the people organized in view of a rational conquest, of a normal utilization of the world's capital? Our philosophers, our scientists, our statesmen, are preparing the event. Just think: in the eighteenth century we were divided, we were ideologists and dreamers, and our country was the battlefield of Europe. Later we loved flowers, moonlight, love, mystical theories. Then Napoleon rose, and planted his foot on our belly — yes, on our belly, Monsieur! . . . And he was right, for we were weak. Germany pulled herself together. She reflected. She elaborated her doctrine. Bismarck, our great Bismarck, with his great broom, swept away pity, divagations (you say divagations?) on liberty, equality, and fraternity. And we beat Austria, we beat Denmark, we beat France, as we shall beat the rest. This strength of ours bases its eventual victory on its truth. It says, in short: only the strong man can realize himself. It is thus that humanity is fashioned. The strong command. The weak obey. And at last everything is working to this end. This we proclaimed yesterday at the anniver-

sary banquet of His Majesty. Alsace, whose ship we have launched on the great river of civilization, must become one of the horses of our Imperial chariot, or refuse to draw it and perish miserably. We care little which fate she chooses. We are strong enough to hold under our fist millions of men incapable of understanding our ideal and our truth, which is *the* truth: the scientific exploitation of human energies."

Reymond listened attentively. He felt no inclination to smile at this man, whose patriotic mania made him formidable. He merely asked him a question — an insidious one, it is true.

"Are you an Alsatian by birth, Monsieur Kummel?"

Kummel threw off his mask.

"No. I am an Alsatian by adoption. For over twenty-seven years I have been struggling in this province, which is so perverted by foreign idealism. I have adopted this country, to which I am giving all my powers. I am consequently an Alsatian. But, of course, pure German blood only runs in my veins. I say these things to you, because you, who belong to a nation the main portion of which speaks the German tongue, are capable of collaborating in our work."

The gaunt schoolmaster raised his head. His truth seemed, indeed, to inflate his hollow chest. The subject was exhausted for the moment. Reymond, in a voice he strove to make as natural as possible, took occasion to say:

"By the way, Monsieur Kummel, could you undertake

to give German lessons to my two pupils, the young Bohlers? Their father asked me to speak to you about it. Four hours a week, to begin. . . ."

Kummel's face was illuminated.

"Certainly! . . . Yes, certainly. It will be an honour and a pleasure to me to enter Monsieur Bohler's house."

Reymond hastened to put the dots on the i's.

"The schoolroom would not be available. The lessons would be at my rooms, if you don't mind."

"Or here?"

"Your house is rather out of the way for us. And there are other reasons. Let it be at my rooms, please."

Kummel bowed.

"We may look upon the matter as settled. We can arrange the details more precisely. . . . I congratulate Monsieur Bohler. A lady cannot instruct men, especially in our virile tongue. Only he who considers our German tongue as the expression of our German soul can be worthy of this sacred office."

When Reymond was gone, Kummel said to his wife, who entered, followed by the small fry:

"Wife, I, thy husband, Konrad Kummel, am appointed tutor to the young Bohlers. We are at last breaking open the doors of high Alsatian society. . . . As they say themselves, patience and time do more than force and rage."

And he filled his pipe with a guttural laugh.

V

AND so in the hollow of the valley the noise of the sabots, the cry of the hooter, the toil of the men and machines, go on. From morn till eve workers bend over the spindles, or follow the course of the shuttles, or tie the broken thread. The whole factory is an instrument of precision, in which men, too, are wheels. Everything is a matter of calculation, of returns. He who consumes so much must produce so much. Regardless of chatter and irresponsible theories, the manufacturer keeps his eye on the current prices of wool and cotton, adds up figures, compares them with other figures, dispatches his telegrams.

So, then, here there is this industrial life, this complicated machinery, this struggle with the raw material, which has to be bought, transformed, and exported. Elsewhere, this is all. But here the struggle is embittered by the struggle against men who wage war upon one's habits, one's traditions, one's language, one's soul. Thus, a man can never unbend entirely, and take his ease, either in his office, in the street, in his family circle, each member of which brings in some echo of the conflict, or even in church, where he is ordered to pray for the usurper.

Pacifism? Disarmament? The enemy is within the

fortress — a cunning and a powerful enemy. So one has to choose between suicidal abdication and a strenuous, dangerous life. Every evening — what will happen to-morrow? — is something of a vigil under arms.

Solitude, meditation. But when so many machines are in motion, there is a constant appeal from practical things. And when one's country is suffocating, there must be a struggle for life even in silence, while at times a fever takes hold of one, restless impulses; then one says: "No, this cannot go on." And yet it does go on. One resigns oneself. One has to be patient, to hold one's peace.

Those who grow up in this virile and melancholy atmosphere bear rude traces of the conflict. The young, whose blood runs swift and hot, are full of indignation and astonishment. Why do we not rise and thrust the intruder out? They collect prints showing the prohibited uniforms; they have notebooks in which they inscribe the names of battleships, the number of guns and aeroplanes? They talk of the time "when we shall have got back Alsace" with all the superb light-heartedness of youth. Meanwhile, year is added to year, experience to experience; they feel in their turn all the weight of the yoke. Many, in the revolt of their hearts and bodies, struggle furiously against the strait-waistcoat in which they are to be clothed; others, with precocious gravity, wrap themselves in silence, and prepare for a long patience.

Reymond found all these traits of the Alsatian char-

acter, fashioned by nearly forty years of annexation, in his pupils.

Emile Zumbach, aged fifteen, was a taciturn lad, greatly interested in chemistry and mathematics. It sometimes happened that he never opened his lips throughout a walk of two hours. He had no pretensions to elegance. Thick calves, short thighs, a solid torso, crowned by a head with full cheeks. In his eyes a pertinacity, a slow reflectiveness — slow, but sure of its object. As an engineer or chemist, he would continue the line of those who have made the wealth and strength of Alsace. To be and not to seem, to act and not to talk, is their motto.

André Berger, a handsome fellow, distrustful and argumentative, was apparently very different, but in reality closely akin to him. His favourite phrase was: It's not proved. According to him, antiquity, people with nymphs and interwoven with myths, lasted until the Universal Exhibition of 1900. Then the scientific era began. Fiction made him smile. . . . Racine? Pretty words, which lead to nothing. This harshness in the expression of his thought, this sense of utility, and also his splendid rectitude, made André a typical Alsatian. His tutor said to him one day: "You are always mocking at sentiment. Now listen. On what grounds do you protest against the annexation?"

He replied as follows: "Before a transaction is concluded, all those concerned have to agree to it. Did we Alsatians ever agree to the annexation? No; so to us

it is not binding, it was not a loyal compact. Loyalty is not a sentiment. By sentiment I mean the whimperings of young girls, their forget-me-not albums, and the like."

By which, no doubt, Berger meant to say that loyalty is more a matter of intellectual purity than a quality of the heart, and that sentiments which are too freely formulated are enervating. He had the reticence of a healthy boy brought up in the German school, who had deliberately adopted something of its hardness. He summed up his thoughts in these terms: "We shall not get Alsace back by means of literature."

Charles Weiss and René Bohler were very much alike. The two friends, who had long bent over the same alphabet and played the same pranks, were now separated by their studies; for one was to remain in Alsace, while the other was to seek his fortune in France. Delighted to be together twice a week, they whistled the same tunes, ran at the same pace, greeted the same old people, and climbed the same trees. If one threw a stone into the river, the other thought it incumbent on him to perform the same feat. They were a frank, noisy, greedy, pair, bubbling over with laughter at every trifle. Their favourite studies were geography and geology, everything connected with figures, superficies, and the bones which enable the scientist to determine periods. They were the Alsatian hedonist in bud. Yet sometimes from out this apparent superficiality came a profound word, a righteous anger, revealing the drama that underlay their youthful joy and health.

One evening the band was returning from a walk. As they passed the graveyard of Moosch, René said suddenly to his friend:

"I am glad I'm not one of those in there. They won't see us drive the Schwobs out of Alsace."

Charles Weiss replied: "Drive out the Schwobs? And if we are killed? . . . Then it will be our turn for the churchyard."

"It won't matter being killed, if we have had time to see them clearing out first."

"That's true. But it will be wretched for those who fall at the beginning, before one can be sure."

Such are the words of Alsatian boys — boys of thirteen, fourteen, and fifteen, whose voices are changing, whose socks are turned over their shoes, who have sturdy legs, good digestions, and a great capacity for frolic and mischief, and yet who can suddenly talk in the sunshine of dying for their province.

Jean Bohler was a creature of a different clay. To understand him, one had to know his mother, a refined and cultivated Frenchwoman, exquisitely tactful; born in the country, she had been brought up in Paris, and had married into Alsace. Suddenly she had accepted the task of silent duty. From the concerts, lectures, and lively conversations of Paris, she had come to the sheltered valley, the patois of workmen, the Sunday bells ringing for High Mass. She was a Protestant, which increased her isolation. Thus, in the temple of her soul there was a sort of quiet blossoming, nourished by beauti-

ful books, read and re-read, clarified until all that lingered in the memory was their human quality; she planned and dreamt during the long afternoons, when all were at work, evolving a habit of personal courage, of resignation to uncongenial things; the wish to shed around her that warmth of heart thanks to which the home — all that really belongs to the Alsatian — is a home indeed.

This wealth of pensive feeling, this warm sensibility, this respect for work — which was Monsieur Bohler's religion — Jean had received at birth. At fifteen he loved to seek the knotty points of a question, listening attentively to arguments and objections, recognizing the complexity of problems. Reverent and sensitive, grieved and agitated by the sight of injustice triumphant, he was foredoomed to suffer in life, to be caught in more than one net, to bruise his wings against more than one barrier. In difficult hours he would seek consolation in music, that world of sonorous reverie, of immaterial realities, of poignant beauty and divine appeasement. . . . Passionate, shy as boys naturally are who have no sisters, few friends, hardly any one to confide in outside their own family, Jean concentrated all his powers on his studies. How often Reymond had unobtrusively watched his pupil bending over a problem or a translation, had noted the beautiful outline of the brow, the clear eyes, the precocious gravity of the expression, the delicacy of the hands pressed upon the temples as if to hold fast attention.

Reymond was fond of all his pupils, and rejoiced to see them asserting their different individualities with all the exaggeration of their age, but he could not help feeling a special attraction in Jean Bohler, recognizing as he did the spiritual beauty of his character.

On Wednesday and Saturday afternoons the boys foregathered. In winter they crowded into the small schoolroom, but as soon as the fine weather set in there were outdoor excursions, butterfly hunts, and searches for crystals, discussions, and happy bursts of laughter.

On a certain Wednesday in March the little band set out. The first mild days were at hand, when the primroses shed their radiance on the sloping banks. Near the washing-troughs, where kneeling women were wringing out linen, sheets were drying in the azure air. The geese, walking sedately in couples, were seeking pasturage in the meadows. . . . The little terraced gardens and brown roofs of Friedensbach, the still leafless orchards, the yellow line of the river swollen by the melting of the snow, lay in the embrace of the blue hills and mountains to which the smoke of fires lighted in the fields rose in joyous columns.

Suddenly the road was animated by a rhythmic tramp, the flash of drawn swords and bristling helmets. Some battalion was exercising.

"Let us be off!" cried René. "Hort's garden; the gate is open."

It was a very old garden, with a hornbeam hedge box borders, and a service-tree in flower. Old Hort was clip-

ping his hedge. They could hear the sharp click of the sécateurs. He laughed silently at the invasion of his domain. At the school, Kummel was full of energy. He drove his pupils out and arranged them in line; fear and curiosity struggled for the mastery in their little faces. The Justice appeared; the policemen, marching slowly, buttoned tightly into their closely fitting tunics; then Kraut, beaming, his pen behind his ear.

"There is storm in the air; the worms are coming out," said old Hort on his ladder.

The battalion approached. Reymond's five pupils hiding behind the thicket, the kneeling washerwomen with their bowed heads, seemed living images of conquered Alsace. . . . There was a hoarse shout. The sharp slap of a thousand guns on a thousand shoulders. A second shout; the heavy sound of boots grinding the soil; the splendid clamour of brass instruments; the shrill piping of the fifes; the Chinese bells all a-quiver; the dull, intermittent thud of the drumsticks on the great drum. The numbered, ticketed, trained and disciplined mass, belaboured by orders, flowed along like the stream of an embanked river. Confronted with this manifest cohesion, the individual hesitated and effaced himself. Round faces, flat faces, all submissive; harshly outlined chins, the rictus of lips contracted by effort, the flash of the eye quenched in obedience, lined necks stretched forward as towards a fatality; and everywhere so mathematically aligned that it made the spectator's head swim; the four booted feet thrown forward, the four booted

feet planted on the ground, the four swinging arms, the four cowhide knapsacks, the four parallel rifles, the four docile faces, the four spikes of the four helmets; among the officers, a tension of every muscle, a haughty elegance, swords upheld like principles; the whole rolling along behind the strident cries of the fifes and the booming of the big drum, a formidable force, one man the counterpart of another, one section the replica of another section, one company identical with another company; each physically alike, mentally alike, each showing the same alert expectation of an order, after which all would halt, as if thunderstruck, and then proceed as before.

When the noise died away in the distance, when the last rifles had turned the corner of the street, a kind of disciplined terror still prevailed. The inhabitants shook their heads, subjugated.

The walking party entered the path that climbs the mountain in silence. Suddenly, as if an order had gone round, the five pupils began to declaim. . . . Around them, ever since they could remember, there had been sighs and lamentations; exiles who were forbidden to come and greet father and mother, or to follow their coffins; peaceable folks ordered off within forty-eight hours, for no ostensible reason; others tolerated from sunrise to sunset, but obliged to go and spend the night at Basle; disorganized lives, resentments, hatreds.

"You know," said René, "when our cousin Marthe

married a Saxon, father said: 'She is dead now.' No one ever mentions her."

Then Charles Weiss:

"My father says the French pacifists are fools, and that one does not throw away one's stick when the wolf is prowling round the house."

Zumbach continued:

"As to me, I will never forgive them for forcing us to shout *Hoch!* on the Emperor's birthday."

"What! Do you really shout?"

"One has to. They watch to see whether you open your mouth or not."

All five exclaimed in chorus: "It's disgusting! disgusting! . . . We are made to tell lies all the time."

"We have to say that Charlemagne was a German Emperor."

"We have to sing, 'Germany, O my fatherland!'"

"We have to say that Alsace suffered under the French yoke."

"And that Kummel!" interjected Jean Bohler. "The day you were at Mulhouse, Monsieur, he told us that France was rotten to the core, that she had no longer any children, any religion, any morality, anything! He said that all the authors of the Revolution were madmen, and that they had proved this by guillotining each other; that God had decreed the triumph of the healthy nations, and that those who oppose the plans of Germany are fools or people who prefer debauchery to discipline."

"And what did you say?" asked Reymond.

"Nothing. Father has forbidden us to answer."

"However," said René, "the other day, when he turned his head away, I squirted six drops of ink on his grey trousers."

Below them, on the winding ribbon of the main road, the battalion advanced. And the sight was terribly impressive: in this peaceful Alsatian valley, on this road where forty years ago French infantrymen in red trousers had gone along singing, *As-tu vu la casquette, la casquette . . .*" moved this Prussian battalion, whose hymn rose to the crest of the mountains: "*Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein . . .*"

"Monsieur," asked Jean Bohler, the tears glistening in his eyes, "if you were an Alsatian, would you stay here or would you go?. . . To stay means marching with those men. . . . To go means forsaking Alsace for ever. . . . What would you do?"

"I shall stay," declared Weiss. "Those who go away leave empty places. We know who fills them."

They began to dispute. One cried:

"Those who stay are the finest; they suffer more."

"No, those who go do, for they leave everything they love."

"They are cowards to go."

"Cowards! Say that again! . . . The cowards are those who put up with insults in the German barracks for two years without a word. At last they must begin to despise themselves."

"It is right to go."

"It is right to stay."

Jean Bohler repeated his question obstinately:

"Well, Monsieur, would you go?"

What could Reymond say? The goatherd was playing a tune on his flute. The children came dancing and singing out of school. A spring sweetness filled the air. On the mountain path five boys, aged from thirteen to fourteen, wrangled, one crying "Go," the other "Stay." And they were talking of their little fatherland. Yes, what should he say? Deeply moved, Reymond replied:

"Dear boys, you are all fine fellows."

Another of these walks remained graven in Reymond's memory. One morning Weiss had said in a mysterious tone:

"Now's the time. They are in flower."

"What are?"

"The jonquils, of course. I know the places. This afternoon my wife expects you and your pupils to tea. At a quarter-past four I shall come in from the office and carry you off. Not a word; it's all settled."

This tea was of a kind to be expected at the Weiss's house: almond *Kougelhopfs,* cakes of various kinds with cream or kirsch, butter, jam, tea. Passing round the table continually, Madame Weiss filled cups, cut slices, offered and served without paying the slightest attention to refusals.

"I don't like people to pick like birds. . . . You must

have this piece, Suzanne, after giving lessons for two hours."

"What!" protested Reymond, "are you going to compete with me, Mademoiselle?"

"Yes, indeed. And quite clandestinely. Not very high-class literature, however. I am just teaching a little French to three young girls who are going out to service. And then I have my evening classes: eleven pupils. . . . One must do what one can. . . . I have an idea that if I have not been troubled hitherto I owe it to Justice Döring. Ever since the famous accident, he bows almost to the ground when we meet. I respond, and even smile a little. It's quite worth while, if it enables me to teach French to eleven little girls."

"Perhaps it was Döring who sent you those anonymous verses," said Charles, and he declaimed:

"Tu as perdu la clef de ton cœur,
Tu ne peux la trouver,
Et cela te fait peur. . . .
Je vais te rassurer!
La clef est dans mon cœur
Pour toujours en sûreté."

[Thou hast lost the key of thine heart; thou canst not find it, and this alarms thee. Have no fear; the key is in my heart, and safe for ever.]

"Perhaps it was you, Monsieur," said René.

Reymond blushed.

"Little simpleton!"

"Excellent Döring!" said Suzanne, "collector of lost objects! . . . I shall be obliged to ask him for my heart again. It will be touching."

"You would be magnificent as Madame Döring," continued Charles. "Take my arm. We will march along the square of Friedensbach on the Emperor's birthday, you in a *Reformkleid*, I in a frock-coat, with my moustaches turned up to the stars."

The company laughed till they cried at their evolutions. They then proceeded to imitate the young Lieutenant who walks about with his eyeglass in his eye, his feline graces when he passes a lady, the condescending thrust of his jaw to inferiors, his unfathomable bows to the Colonel.

"Enough of this," said Suzanne at last. "We see too much of them out of doors; we don't want to bring them in here."

She sat down at the piano. Humming the words, she played: *Ma terre est la plus belle et pourtant qu'elle est triste.*[1]

A Saint Odile smiled prettily from the light background of a piece of tapestry. The walls were covered with souvenirs of happier times, the records of an entire past. The song continued its lament. To be twenty, to be made for happiness, to live in this moribund land, and to feel that one could not live elsewhere.

The sudden irruption of Weiss put an end to this momentary melancholy. In five minutes they were all

[1] "Fair is my land, and yet how sad!"

on the mountain path. The boys ran on in front. Weiss began to explain his passion in lyric terms:

"The Vosges! . . . If you want to know the virtues of a woman, you must question the man of her heart. Well, I am the faithful lover of the Vosges. I once went to the Oberland. A delightful journey. My wife, leather trunks, big hotels. . . . But more Schwobs even than here. And such peaks and heights! They crushed me. They are too grandiose for poor Victor Weiss. So, when I came back, the Vosges said to me: 'It serves you right, Weiss; you should have stayed here.' And now I stay."

Then, without giving Reymond time to defend the Oberland, he asked:

"What do you think of Alsace? Do you feel that we are standing firm?"

Reymond hesitated a little.

"I hardly know how to answer you. I know so few people beyond my pupils. The middle classes, of course, are sound, firm as a rock. As to the workmen, I brush by them; I don't know them."

"The reason I ask you the question is that I have just been reading an article which has enraged me by its superficiality, one of those articles written by a journalist after spending a few hours in one of our towns, where he has conversed with a couple of Germans he has taken for native Alsatians. When people deal with Alsace they should explain everything, or they should not meddle with her affairs. Do you suppose this gentleman knows

that after the annexation two hundred thousand Alsatians gave up their homes? And that every year since then from twenty to thirty thousand others, disgusted by absurd and harassing regulations, have followed them? That we have been bleeding ourselves white for love of France? Where are our intellectuals? In Paris. Where are our ardent spirits? In the Foreign Legion. Now, I maintain that both are equally necessary to the life of a country. And in place of these four or five hundred thousand Alsatians, the flower of the nation, a like number of Germans have settled upon our soil as upon a colony. These are the conditions under which we, thus weakened and deprived of our natural leaders, have to struggle against a people of sixty-five million souls, who crush us with the whole weight of their army, their administration, and their educational system."

Weiss bowed his tall figure, sighing as if he felt the whole weight of the burden upon his shoulders. He continued:

"You must not expect verbal heroism from us. No! the drama is a hidden one, buried like our dead who fell in the war. We have had the heroism of the heart, the fidelity that makes no sound. How many have they succeeded in 'rallying' after forty years of persecution? A few dozens. How many Alsatians have become German officers? They may be counted on the fingers of one hand. Just calculate what our profits would have been had we laid our hand in the German hand. How many offices! How many decorations! What a future

for our industry? What a lift for a little province like ours to be accepted as a member of the mightiest nation in the world. We answered No! They threatened us. No! They harassed us. No! Do not misunderstand me. There were no disturbances, no cries, no ostentatious hysteria. You might live among us for years without witnessing any overt manifestation. It is our hearts which cry No! And that is enough. No army in the world can break down that barrier. What I tell you is the truth, Monsieur Reymond. . . . Oh! there have been defections. We are human. But in spite of everything, I, who know so many stories, and how many are the lives that have been shattered and overthrown, I am proud — yes, proud — of being an Alsatian! Come. You were at Friedensbach on the Emperor's birthday. Well, save Maus, the exception which proves the rule — and his mother is a German — how many red, white, and black flags did you see on the house-fronts of thoroughbred Alsatians? Answer me. How many of these flags among our own people? Not a single one. After nearly forty years, it's magnificent. Remember that the master is among us, the master with the mailed fist, the owner of the cash-box and everything in it. How human it is to flatter the master, to try to get a smile, an approving word from him. But there was not one! Not one! "

The flood-gates were opened. Reymond was tactful enough not to interrupt.

"Shall I explain our attitude? It is so simple. I have already touched on it with you once or twice. We

have been used to liberty for centuries. And we have also been used to invasion. Ever since Arminius, only think! Our love of liberty gives us strength to await the end of the storm. We bow to it. We draw our heads down between our shoulders. And always, always, deliverance has come to us, often contrary to all expectations. You know our history. . . . In the Middle Ages, our ten free cities; our alliance with the Swiss cantons against the marauding nobles. . . . This is why there are so many ruins on the Vosges peaks! . . . On the other side of the Rhine they still have their squires and their Junkers, all the folks whose backs we broke four or five centuries ago. . . . Ah! we are the sons of an ancient civilization; we cannot be persuaded by kicks on our behinds! We shall triumph once more, if only our young people are left to us, and we have leaders. And we have them! We shall have them! The day of groans and jeremiads is past. When we have ten Dr. Buchers in Alsace — nay, five even — *we* shall be assimilating the Schwobs. It is beginning already. . . . The grandfathers were beaten, stunned, terrorized. They closed their doors. The sons expected everything from France, instead of expecting everything from themselves. Seeing that nothing came, they in their turn closed doors and windows. And now we have the grandsons, the third generation. They play football, they box. They undergo their term of service in the German barracks valiantly, for love of Alsace. After that, they cannot be expelled from their country. They are at home.

They have rendered to the Empire all that the Empire can expect from a man. But do you think they find an ideal in those barracks? any food for the soul? No. All they find is disgust, melancholy. Then they reflect. They have it out with themselves. They turn to the past and question it. And tradition makes its power felt. They realize what they lack. Liberty! Liberty! There are hundreds of these young men now at Metz, Strasburg, Colmar, Mulhouse, in our little towns, often in the villages, everywhere! . . . Alsace is seeking and finding herself — a young, strong Alsace, matured by the sufferings of two generations. Count upon her! . . . Listen! "

From the French summit of the Drumont, a bugle — some patrol of Chasseurs had arrived there — sent its shrill appeal to Alsace in clear, high notes which rang through the stillness of the valley. Weiss had stopped short, rooted to the ground, quivering, his finger on his lips.

"Listen! How gay it is, how frank, how free! Ah! tradition! "

His eye ranged over the heights, plunged into the valley flecked with points of silver by the wandering river, searched the depths of the forest as if in quest of that Liberty which one almost expected to see, in human form, resuscitated and rejuvenated, gliding along the slopes.

They resumed their walk in silence. And suddenly, quite close to them lay the jonquil fields, like broad shafts of light, a golden laughter on the banks of the

bounding stream. Bending over the yellow petals, Weiss gathered them eagerly, as if these jonquils were the liberty he dreamt of. Presently a goat and two white kids came dancing among the gold. Weiss, touched to the heart, opened his arms. Bounding on its stiff legs, with adorable awkwardness, its pretty trustful eyes fixed upon him, the kid ran to the man who was calling it. Giants are very susceptible to the appeal of weakness. Weiss picked it up tenderly and kissed it on its pink muzzle.

The boys came up, in company with the owner of the goat, an old man from a neighbouring village.

"Good-day!" said Weiss to the old man. "Did you hear the bugle?"

"Yes."

"Well . . .?"

"Well, what!"

The old man looked cunningly at the strangers. Driving goat and kids before him, he answered:

"A bugle is a bugle."

Weiss was irritated.

"You see how they have terrorized these poor old people. They will say nothing. Everything is hidden, kept dark. We have to look to you young ones, you see."

The boys laughed gaily. Then Weiss, sniffing his bouquet of jonquils as if to draw strength from the perfume born of the soil, uttered a mountaineer's cry, the echo of which mingled with the lively echo of the bugle.

VI

A CLASS of thirty to forty pupils; to the teacher they are an almost anonymous crowd. There is a curriculum to be carried out, marks to be given, discipline. Teacher and pupils meet and part. The years pass and soon make them strangers.

Two pupils. The teacher lives with them. He becomes their friend. He divines their thoughts, their reticences. He gives lessons, but he also converses and discusses with them, seated on the corner of the table. In this way ties are formed that last a lifetime, and it is a joy to meet again later those to whom one has given the best of oneself.

The delightful schoolroom, so well lighted, so attractive, with its map, its globe, its blackboard, its glazed bookcase, its two desks, its statuette of Joan of Arc, its collections of insects and of stones, its engravings representing the bombardment of Strasburg, a street in the old town of Colmar, the castle of St. Ulrich. . . . Jean and René are seated. Beside them is the big Quicherat dictionary. And the tutor is dictating the text of the Latin exercise: "Socrates exhorted all those who aspired to an office to ask themselves if they were capable of filling it. He was fond of saying: it is really disgraceful that a man who desires to lead an army should neglect to learn how to do so, when he might.

And he would be more deserving of punishment from his fellow-citizens than another who should undertake to make statues without having learnt the art of the sculptor. It is not sufficient to walk about in one's town. . . ."

The tutor broke off: "Take care; there is no displacement: *Ambulat in horto.*

"M'sieur," remarked René artlessly, "when I walk in the garden, I displace myself."

"True; but you don't go out of the garden. . . . Let us go on. . . ."

The pens scratch the paper. Jean and René bend their heads over the blank sheets. They have an hour's work before them. Reymond opens the *Journal d'Alsace-Lorraine,* which the old servant has just brought in. There has been a lively debate in Parliament at Strasburg: "You will end by telling us," said a deputy to the members of the Government, "that in Paradise the angels have red, white, and black wings. But this will not encourage us to go there." Said another: "You are always talking of the French white-wash, the French varnish. But there are indelible varnishes. Are you sure that yours is one of this sort?" So, while Jean and René are putting Socrates' counsels to his contemporaries into faulty Latin, men are doing battle round an idea over there. One party is saying: "We have power." The other is replying: "We have memory."

"M'sieur, m'sieur," asks René in a plaintive voice, "what use is Latin? It is a dead language."

"And French?"

"French is a living language."

"Yes, but it is derived from Latin. To know French thoroughly, one has to know Latin."

René submits. But presently he returns to the charge.

"M'sieur, you dictated: 'Carthagenian, it is disgraceful to lie.' Did the Carthagenians lie as much as all that?"

"They were habitual liars."

"Ah!"

Jean, exasperated, exclaimed: "Monsieur, please tell him to be quiet. It is impossible to work."

The window is open. The lilacs planted along the wall send out their fragrance. Beyond is the courtyard of the factory, the handcarts pushed along by men with grimy faces. One breath of air wafts the scent of the lilacs. Another brings the dull thud of long-armed steel pistons, together with a smell of rancid oil.

The tutor looks out of the window. In the courtyard really interesting things are going on. The coachman Hintermann is washing the carriage, as he does every morning at the same hour, throwing pails of water to wash the seats, the naves, the axles, the springs, and the hood of the carriage. A ring of smoke rises from his pipe. He scratches his head. Now he is cleaning Jean's bicycle with a skilful hand.

"M'sieur, does *quin* always need the subjunctive?"

And now comes the gardener, basket on arm, a tall dry fellow, his left eye half closed. From one of the workroom windows, the girls blow him a kiss on their

fingers. The gardener responds by closing his left eye completely. He walks with a heavy step to the door of his master's kitchen, to hand in radishes and salads. Hintermann unchains the two dogs that they may stretch their legs and get an appetite for their soup at ten o'clock. The animals gallop round madly, and at last return to their kennels. . . . The exercise is finished.

The next lesson is geography: the Rhine and the Rhone.

Reymond waxes eloquent. He dwells on general ideas. He shows the two streams, gushing from the hollow of a rock a few paces one from another, mingling the murmur of their voices for a moment, swelling with the waters of a hundred other streams, roaring in the depths of valleys, running in the plains, becoming mighty rivers, the grey waters of which are lost in blue lakes. There is a period of repose, of disengagement. Suddenly the two rivers flee from each other at right angles. The Rhone leaps towards the land of the sun, the Rhine towards the land of mists, one greeted by the smile of Mireille, the other by the melancholy song of the Lorelei. . . . Mulberry-trees, cypresses, pines, and olive-trees . . . birches and firs . . . the Palace of the Popes, Saint-Trophyme . . . the ruins of the Burgs, the pierced spires of Gothic cathedrals; the tambourines of the Cigales, the two Homers of Sérignan and Maillane, the daughters of Arles with their graceful caps, Tartarin of Tarascon, the stones of the Cran with their guardians and their black bulls. . . . Spires, Worms, Mayence, and Bonn, the black

country of the Ruhr, the horizon intersected by tall chimneys, the innumerable iron bridges, the clank of hammers and the glow of furnaces. Here, the rivers rushing in torrents from the bare Alpine slopes, dragging their waters over beds of white pebbles; there, slow rivers among fat meadows, the highways of ships; the Mediterranean, its rippling waters smiling and dancing; . . . the North Sea, with its low coast lines, its grey skies, its greenish billows.

"Monsieur," interrupted the philosophic Jean, "you talk of geographical fatality; you say that a man is moulded by his surroundings. But don't you think that the will of man often gets the better of these surroundings? For instance, the Germans say to us: 'You lve on the banks of the Rhine, which is a German river, so I want you, I take you, I keep you.' Whereas the French say to the Corsicans, the Bretons, the Flemings: 'We are equals, we are brethren; why should we not keep together?' Don't you think that this is the secret of France's greatness? Her humanity breaks down geographical affinities; she wins the affection of Alsace-Lorraine; she creates wills which are stronger than geographical fatality."

"All theories!" cried René. "It's a question, not of geographical affinities, but of aeroplanes and guns. The one who has most of these beats the other."

These speeches are characteristic: Jean is a meditative spirit, attracted by general ideas, always deep in his books, eager to rationalize his sentiments and to sentimen-

talize his reasons; René is the good-hearted boy, matter of fact and downright, ready for frolic and fisticuffs.

But the lessons are not always given in the schoolroom. Sometimes, in the afternoon, Virgil is taken up on the hillside. The ants are running about along the rugged trunks. A squirrel, seated on a high branch, strokes his muzzle with his forepaws. The woodman's ax rings out from the depths of the forest. . . . Silver-leaved poplars, beeches and birches, flowering pear and cherry-trees; the river rippling over its stony bed; yellow butterflies dancing in pairs, wing touching wing; the hum of insects like a bell quivering in the sky; the two oxen, coming and going with bowed heads along a field; the flash of the ploughshare as it cuts its furrow: it is the very cadence of Virgil's verses, the setting which gives actuality to the alternate speeches of the shepherds.

Poor Melibœus driving his flock before him on the way to exile! Tityrus pities him.

"Melibœus, you may spend yet another night here, and rest upon this bed of branches. I have ripe fruits, cooked chestnuts, bowls full of thick cream. It is late. See, the smoke rises from the roofs of the village; the shadow that creeps down the mountains lengthens on the plain."

Jean looks at the valley, at his home, at all the paths he has so often trodden. Then his eyes fix themselves on a distant point.

"Melibœus is like us, Monsieur. . . . *We* shall soon have to leave our valley, and for ever. But we shall not

be so happy as Virgil's shepherd, for we shall not drive our flocks before us. The police will see to it that no one shall say to us: 'You may spend yet another night here.'"

Jean knows that poetry is eternal. He takes that which comes from distant centuries, and clothes the thought which haunts him therein. It was a poignant moment: a lad of sixteen recognizing his own story in one of Virgil's *Bucolics*. Reymond looked at his pupil. They talked a little. They paraphrased the speeches of the shepherds. They imagined them in their own surroundings, at the corner of the hedge, under the rays of the setting sun.

"A little history, and then we will go down."

Reymond speaks of Joan or Arc, of the village of Domrémy, of the voices which counselled and ordered.

"Voices! . . . What does that mean?" asked René.

Whereupon his brother interrupted:

"Monsieur, please don't explain. It is so much more beautiful just as it is. . . . Voices. . . . Every one can imagine what he likes."

Reymond describes the battles; the anointing of Charles at Reims; the reverses; Jeanne before her judges.

"Do you think it was right to leave your home without the permission of your father and mother? . . . Ought we not to honour father and mother? . . . They have forgiven me. . . . Did you think it was no sin to behave in this way? . . . God commanded it. If I had had a hundred fathers and a hundred mothers, I should have

gone. . . . Does God hate the English? . . . I know nothing as to God's love or hatred for the English, but I know that they will be driven from France, all save those who will perish here."

"It is a beautiful story," said René. "But do you think, Monsieur, that it all really happened as we are told?"

Jean shrugged his shoulders. Then he asked:

"Monsieur, do you think there could ever be a second Joan of Arc?"

"Ah! who can tell?"

"Why not? Not quite the same of course — but with the same strong will, the same faith in victory."

They walked downwards towards the valley. Jean went on talking, as if to himself:

"I cannot say how I love Alsace. I think of it all the time. Alsace! It is a fine country, the finest in the world. And I am sure there will be another Joan of Arc."

On the main road they parted. When they got home, René threw himself upon his statistics: French army, German army. He knows the names of all the battleships, their tonnage, the capacity of the airships, the feats of the aeroplanes. Madame Bohler bends over the figures and numbers.

"This is a positive mania, my child. Instead of preparing your lessons for tomorrow, you waste your time adding up tons and cannon. Later, when you are at Saint-Cyr. . . . But now!"

"Mother, what is the use of all those stories they tell us about the mother of the Gracchi! They are not worth one good aeroplane."

"Really, you are absurd!" Madame Bohler smiled.

"What do you say, Jean?"

"I have finished my lessons. Shall we have a little music?"

Monsieur Bohler, who had just come in from the factory, threw back the curtain which divided the smoking-room from the drawing-room. He listened to the song of the 'cello, artless as childhood, but suddenly becoming agitated: halting efforts, storm, calm, gentle memories which lull the soul. Seated in an arm-chair, he saw reflected in the mirror, as in a dream, the movement of the bow, the fingers flying over the ivory keys. Another year, and they, the parents, would be alone. Longer, more silent evenings, letters at intervals. Thinking of these things, Monsieur Bohler let his pipe go out. . . . The instruments became silent.

"Monsieur Reymond," said Kummel after one of his lessons, "I have a proposal to make to you. Monsieur Maus, the merchant, an Alsatian, a most worthy man, of the highest intelligence, has commissioned me to ask you whether you would be so kind as to give some French lessons to his son, a lad (*galopin*, don't you say?) of thirteen, very industrious and very studious. Perhaps you would take me also, for even in an elementary lesson there is always something to learn. Ah! Monsieur

Reymond! As a Swiss, as the representative of a neutral country, you might collaborate with us in our work of conciliation between immigrants and natives, as you say. You are, of course, outside parties. Yes, indeed, you might work to fill up that ditch of pride which certain Alsatians have dug between them and us, their brethren in race and language. That is the part a true Swiss should play. The truth is that we German intellectuals are cut off from all agreeable relations in this country which is our country. And yet it would all be so simple if we met, explained things, cried: 'You are our lost brethren; we love you.' The future of Alsace would then be truly magnificent, enviable, whereas now her childish pride and sulkiness plunge her into retrogradism. . . . Is that the right word? . . . You see the plan; you give lessons to the Bohler boys; I give them lessons; you give some to the son of Monsieur Maus, a man of an old Alsatian stock, who has succeeded in breaking down the bondage of prejudice and has come to us with outstretched hand and open heart. . . . In this way, gradually, you will bring about a reconciliation between sons of the same nation. You will leave Alsace with joy in your heart, and every one will be ready to certify: 'Monsieur Reymond is a worthy man. As far as he was able, he strengthened national sentiment in the country where he earned his bread.' "

Kummel had thrown himself back in his arm-chair. His grey eyes were fixed suggestively on Reymond. What was the tutor to say?

"Monsieur Kummel, I feel much honoured by your confidence in me. . . . Please thank Monsieur Maus from me, but I am very busy. . . ."

"But in the evening . . ."

"In the evening especially. I work on my own account then. I am preparing a thesis."

"Well, couldn't you sometimes take the Maus boy with the Bohlers?"

"It would be difficult. We work chiefly at Greek and Latin. . . . Our program is drawn up very precisely. Really, I can't think how it could be managed."

"Try to find a way, Monsieur Reymond. Just think what a magnificent task is offered to you. Try."

"Really, it is quite impossible."

"Think, think."

"What impudence!" thought Reymond, when he was left in peace. "This Kummel is artful and audacious to an unimaginable degree. He is no half-hearted agent of *Deutschtum*. I must tell Monsieur Bohler, just to hear what he will say. It will be interesting."

Next day, as Reymond was lunching with the Bohlers, he described Kummel's proposition in jesting terms. Monsieur Bohler frowned. He said nothing. Shortly afterwards he suggested a stroll in the garden. At first he and Reymond walked along the fine gravel of the paths in silence. The dogs ran in front of their master, gambolling and biting at each other. Monsieur Bohler smoked his pipe in short puffs. Suddenly he began:

"Monsieur Reymond, I am not given to talking, as

you know. Words, words are things the winds carry away. But I must just explain to you, once for all, more fully than I have been able to do incidentally, the reasons for our attitude. . . . Now as to these lessons that have been offered to you, I don't want you to refuse them simply to please me. Higher motives are involved. As the tutor and friend of my sons, you make common cause with us up to a certain point; you undertake to observe a certain reticence and even abstention in respect of certain persons. It is a matter of tact, and more especially of feeling, as, indeed, you have perfectly understood, for which I thank you.

"What is the question, in fact? We have been annexed against our will, on the pretext that in the seventeenth century Germany . . . I am wrong, for in the first place there was no Germany in the seventeenth century. And since that time respect for right, and a certain human decency which forbids men to treat peoples as flocks of cattle, have permeated our minds. Accordingly, we care little whether we are of German stock or not. That is not the question. This is the conclusion of the matter: we know to which side our instinct, our heart, our will incline us. All the rest is mere verbiage.

"But then they change their tactics and say: 'But the annexation is good business for you! (with what scorn Monsieur Bohler snapped out the words!) What advantages it has given you!' The advantages of annexation! You feel what an insult such words are! Does a man forsake his family because it would profit

him? Abominable thought! Does one go over to the conqueror because he is the conqueror? Defeat binds hearts more closely together than victory. This the Germans will never understand.

"They say — for we have been arguing for thirty-eight years: 'Two centuries of union with France have perverted your real nature, have led you astray. To purge you of these pernicious influences, so foreign to the German genius, come to the Germany of the scientists, thinkers, and poets . . . Schiller, Goethe, Kant, and so many others.' Pardon me. We love those men, we read them. But where is their Germany? The Germany we see, the living Germany, worships force, respects the colossal, cultivates pedantry. Human emotion, the joy of liberty, all that makes up the value of life, is elsewhere; we know very well where. . . . *Der deutsche Gedanke beflügelt das deutsche Geschütz* (German thought gives wings to German cannon). I read these words only yesterday in one of their papers. We cannot find anything akin to us in this formula. And we answer: 'We know but one thing, that once we were happy, and now we are wretched.'

"They persist. They reel us off formulæ by the gross, all bearing the stamp of historical and scientific fact. In the press, in the Universities, in the schools, by the lips of officials of every kind, they cry: 'Erudition, organization, discipline, the collective soul, the omnipotence of the State.' We reply: 'Respect for human personality, right of peoples to self-determination, dis-

cipline — yes, but in a framework of liberty.' In the last resort, despairing of convincing us, they throw us under their steam-roller. Well, as we lie flat under it, we still cry: 'Handed over by a duly signed treaty, we respect its clauses. Here are our bodies and our purses. As to the thoughts of our hearts, they are our own.'

"And note this, Monsieur Reymond, that when we defend ourselves we also defend you — you Swiss, who speak German, Italian, and French. If there are no reasons of right and of sentiment to protect your little country, you are lost. It is only a question of time. When we proclaim that it is the desire for solidarity which constitutes a nation, and only that; when we struggle desperately against the might which aspires to force us to our knees, we constitute a dyke for your liberties. If we had yielded, if they had been able to digest us without discomfort, in all probability our conquerors would be gulping down a second and a third meal. Yes, you may thank Alsace . . . !

"You understand the meaning, the bearing of our struggle. Its value is not merely national. It has a human value. The consequence is that we, the manufacturers, who have become the leaders of the nation now that all the higher educational posts and all the administration are in the hands of the Germans, are obliged to blow up the bridges, to avoid compromise, to build up the walls which protect Alsatian hearths. Narrow, intransigeant, petty, we are at times. We must be! We have to be! We appreciate the good qualities of

all these Richter, Lehrer, Inspektoren, Kreisdirektoren, and Oberforstassessoren, but we live apart from them. The hatch is opened, and through it we pay our taxes, our gun-licences; we project the necessary words. The hatch is closed. . . . Professors, officers, non-commissioned officers, schoolmasters, officials, speak, order, teach, catechize, insinuate, punish, reward. . . . All right. Continue. My silence is my reply.

"When I travel on the other side of the Rhine I admire . . . nearly everything. These people are very remarkable. They have qualities of the highest order. There are moments when you are dazzled by their vitality. . . . But when I return home, I am silent. You do not pay compliments to the burglar who has broken into your house.

"And you must not think, on the other hand, that we admire everything that is said and done in France, blindly and implicitly. We deplore the scandals and disputes of which the newspapers are full, the drunkenness, the dwindling population, the liberty which degenerates into licence; and the swarms of orators who chatter while the hammer falls unceasingly on the German anvil to forge the German arms and German mastery. Those who travel, those who really know France, know that behind this curtain of the theatre or the café-concert are the real people, all the wonderful qualities of the race. But a great many Alsatians, impressed by all these ugly rumours, are saddened, and feel themselves condemned to a useless resistance which will lead to suicide. We

are too much forgotten in France. They do not realize there all that we suffer in order to remain faithful. They have so many other irons in the fire! . . . Oblivion would be terrible. Are there not some who would even go farther? We hear of positive blasphemies as the result of an enquiry set on foot by a certain review. Ah! our enemies quote them again and again, and thrust them under our noses with sardonic laughter. Words such as these have disgraced the pen of a French writer: 'In exchange for the forgotten territories I would not give either the little finger of my right hand, which sustains my hand when I write, nor the little finger of my left hand, with which I flick off the ash of my cigarette.' Even if this be nothing but a peevish outburst, it is base.

"But even though such things be, France is always France. Her genius and her traditions endure. It is she who put into our hearts that which keeps us erect before the foe. In spite of those of her children — a mere handful — who insult us, we love her, and shall always love her. No one and nothing can change our motto: 'French if possible, Alsatian always, German never!'

"In conclusion: When Kummel speaks to you of that Maus, of that man who sold himself to get an army contract, of that thrice despicable creature, get behind the wall. If Kummel spies on us, it is his trade and function. He comes from over there. If he teaches his language to my sons at the rate of three marks an hour, if by speeches bearing the impress of the Pan-Germanic

want of tact he disgusts them with the abominable ideas he hawks about, so much the better. But to allow him to take one step further would be to compromise. Once more, the wall."

Monsieur Bohler took out his watch.

"Two o'clock! . . . This is what comes of speechifying! This is the last time I will be caught at it."

Followed by the barking dogs, he went off hurriedly.

Jean and René came up.

"What was father saying to you? He was gesticulating, and he never does that."

"He was explaining to me that there is really and truly a second Joan of Arc, who has given herself up wholly to her idea; that the enemy holds her captive, but that she defies them without ever asking whether her quiet confidence may not cost her her life."

Jean looked his tutor steadily in the eyes.

"A second Joan of Arc?"

"Certainly. And you know her well."

"And what is her name?"

"Alsace."

VII

"ON Sunday," Weiss had said to Reymond, "I am going to take my daughter to the other side of the mountain to her grandfather's at Milchpach, where she is to pay a short visit. . . . My father is eighty. . . . For nearly fifty years he managed a little cotton-mill, founded by himself. Since my mother's death he has lived alone in our modest old home with Catherine, the housekeeper, who is as old as Time! We arrive at nine in the morning. There is bread, coffee, milk, butter, honey, as much as you like. We talk to the grandfather, and walk about the garden. . . . After this a two hours' walk through the woods to Reichburg, where we shall taste the nectar of Alsace. Every year my friend Klug invites the notables of Reichburg, a few friends from outside, and his fifteen or twenty vine-dressers. From twelve to five we feast. Afterwards we play a game of skittles to aid digestion. Our Alsatian meals are things to see, or, better still, to eat. Droll stories are told in good dialect; we brace ourselves; we take courage till we meet again the following year. . . . It is really good to spend a few hours by ourselves. And you are coming with us?"

This is the Alsatian's formula of invitation.

They started at five in the morning. What freshness!

What peace brooding over the meadows! The little caravan climbed the first slopes by the winding path: Suzanne Weiss in a short skirt, her complexion blooming under a broad-brimmed white hat; her father with his vast gestures, his picturesque, abundant speech; Reymond more alive, perhaps, to the presence of the pretty Alsatian than to the beauty of the surroundings.

"Yes," repeated Weiss, "Dictionary extols the race which shows itself too much. I am going to reveal to you the race which hides itself, the splendid race of our country."

"Dictionary? . . ." asked Reymond.

"Kummel, of course. They each have a nickname. The White Rat is Taubenspeck, the Ogre is his colleagues, Arminius is the chief Customs officer, April Smiles is Kraut, and Dutchman (*i. e.*, the Dutch cheese) is Justice Döring, my daughter's admirer. Ah! we Alsatians are malicious!"

"Poor people! I pity them," said Suzanne. "We are really too much given to mockery."

"You see, Monsieur Reymond," went on Weiss, "you see! She pities Döring! When a woman pities a man she ends by loving him; and when she loves him, she is ready to marry him. It's a pleasant prospect for my old age. . . . We are a thousand metres high here. We follow this crest, and then we go down into the valley. Look! look!"

The mountain shadows were fleeing before the morning brightness. They saw the labyrinth of the valleys, the

villages lying flat upon the verdure, the white line of the highways; beyond, the plain with its symmetrical squares of cultivated ground, the ribbon of the Rhine, the Black Forest; Germany, Alsace, and France. It was so beautiful that Reymond could not suppress a regret.

"'Oh! what fools we mortals be!' All these barriers, all these threatening fists! Nature is more intelligent. Flowers bloom everywhere, and birds, heedless of Custom-house and passports, wing their flight and coo in France as they have cooed in Germany."

"We are quite ready to coo," cried Weiss. "But there are birds which cannot coo in a cage. They prefer liberty. Every one to his taste. When our Schwob gentry . . ."

"Papa," intreated Suzanne, "it is so fine! Leave the wretched Schwobs alone for a quarter of an hour."

"You are right, my child. For a quarter of an hour, I promise you."

Weiss whistled a song. There are some vows which it is very difficult to keep. A little board nailed to a tree instructed the passer-by: *Halt! Schöne Aussicht!* This order set Weiss off again.

"Isn't that like them? 'Stop! Admire the view!' And just see how the tourists in green hats have obeyed the mandate! Look at these empty tins, these egg-shells, these greasy *Strassburger Posts!* What a shower of *Kolossals* and *Wunderschöns* must have fallen here!"

Planted in front of the notice, Weiss twirled his moustache upward and threw out his chest, imitating the

gestures of some official during an attack of Nature-worship.

"You can't do it," objected Suzanne. "There is something too fanciful in your beard, in your tie, in the brim of your hat."

"*Halt! Schöne Aussicht!*" repeated Weiss in ecstatic tones. . . . "And now let us get on. This time I promise you to talk of other things for a quarter of an hour."

An impossible pledge! The pink sandstone walls and lace-like battlements of a ruined fortress were outlined against the blue. They approached it. On every tree there were coloured arrows indicating the direction. More placards: *Restored in* 1903, and the name of the architect, one of His Majesty's privy councillors. At the base of the tower was inscribed in red letters: *Sixty-three steps,* 1126 *metres above the sea-level. A remarkable panorama.*

Weiss worked himself up again.

"They can't leave us alone for a minute. They have no respect for intimate thought. They even organize our ruins! It is just the same in their schools. For every composition there is a scheme. Everything that is addded in the way of personal sentiment is scored out. Pupils must not admire this passage. They must scream like amorous peacocks over that. . . . Yes, Monsieur Reymond, look at this ruin. Somewhere you will be sure to find a note setting forth the cost of the restoration, the names of illustrious visitors, a table of direction,

baskets for waste-paper, the depth of the wells in metres and centimetres, bones numbered and labelled, the whole history of these walls, together with the assertion that they were built in German times, destroyed by the French, and restored in all their splendour by the Germans! I am wrong to joke about it. The men who do these things are formidable. . . . The day when their leaders cry 'Up!' they will rise to a man, and crush everything on their way. Ah! Let us turn into the woods and meet fair, free Nature!"

The others followed him breathlessly. This sentimental giant bent the young laburnums to bury his face in their gold, kissed the broom-bushes, ran after the butterflies, threw his hat up towards the sun with wild cries. Drawn forward by an enthusiastic vigour, his jacket over his arm, his waistcoat swelling, his shirt blown out by the wind, his cane in the air, he hurried on with long strides. And suddenly swinging round, he asked:

"What are you saying to my daughter, Reymond? Eh? I will not give her to any one but an Alsatian."

The young people blushed. But Weiss was already absorbed in a new interest. Kneeling against a tree-trunk, he imitated the call of the cuckoo to perfection. Presently a beautiful bird appeared, fluttering uneasily from branch to branch.

"It is the female. You are sold, my beauty. Weiss is only a man. Be off and look for the handsome unknown."

This bearded giant was indefatigable. Bending down

he pointed to what looked like coffee-berries on the moss, "Look! they shine; they are quite fresh. And all in line, five centimetres one from another. . . . That hare was running fast! . . ." The next moment the beard was presented to the astonished beaks of a nest of young woodpeckers in the hollow of a tree.

Suzanne said to Reymond:

"That father of mine! It is impossible to be dull when he is there. I understand his joy so well. After living in constraint and suppressing one's feelings, a reaction takes place, and one feels impelled to sing, to talk to the trees, to elaborate fancies. I wonder if you can put yourself in our place. You are so happy in Switzerland."

"Perhaps too happy. I sometimes envy the Alsatians. You suffer, but you live trebly."

"Doubly would be enough for us sometimes. And yet you are right. When I give my French lessons to the young girls of Friedensbach, when I destroy the frail scaffoldings of Herr Kummel, I can assure you that I feel a satisfaction I could not have in any other country. The Germans watch the soldiers of the future. They neglect us. We are only young girls. That is true. But while our brothers are in barracks and our fathers shut up in factories with their cares, we, together with our mothers, work at the perpetuation of the Alsatian soul. And when our brothers come back after their one year or two years, more or less Prussianized, thanks to us, in a month, this has worn off. . . . And so many of

our young men go into exile! What would become of our country without us? "

Reymond ventured to put a question:

"*You* are not thinking of leaving Alsace? "

"I? Certainly not. I am quite ready to die an old maid at Friedensbach. I shall be a kind of aunt to all sorts of excellent people. Like Penelope, I will destroy every evening, thread by thread, the web the Kummels of the future weave during the day. An old maid who knows her mind is a very valuable person! She trots about with her embroidered handbag! No one looks upon her with suspicion. And she takes advantage of this! "

Suzanne laughed gaily. . . . Reymond would perhaps have preferred a less uncompromising attitude — vague sentiment, discreet emotion. Suddenly he was conscious of a certain mournfulness in the sunshine of this morning and its Sunday bells, and even in the discs of light that danced upon the moss.

They went down towards the valley, passing saw-mills and villages; a churchyard blue with blossoming sage; on the paths, men and women were wending their way to Mass; all one saw of them was their broad-brimmed felt hats and their black or white head-dresses, nodding above the tall grasses.

"Look," said Weiss, "in this farmyard there is a hen with eighteen chicks! Perhaps the Emperor is the godfather of the last? And there, behind that plum-tree, two kids and their mother. . . . Three kids! The third

is sucking, kneeling in the grass. . . . And on this bench, in front of the house, four children! . . . All this young life keeps the heart fresh! Flowers, animals, children; I love them all! . . . And all those people on their way to church: the good priest hurrying along — the boys and girls dancing around the crucifix in the grave-yard, and these houses, these hills, and the sun over and in everything — all this is Alsace, the old, the good, the excellent, the faithful country! Thank God, there is not a Schwob to be seen on the horizon! How we ought to miss that crowning charm! . . . Listen, listen to the song of those children. It is real *patois:* 'Alsace is a very fair country, we know it. We hold it firmly by the bridle, and we will not let it go.' Bravo, children! Ah! I wish I could grow young again, cut off this beard, where some white hairs are beginning to make their appearance, put on the good little face of former years, so round and artless, and dance in the sun on Sundays round the crucifix in the grave-yard. . . . Reymond, you see Alsace! . . . To think that they have taken it from us! . . . Let us go to my father's house! "

A fine old man was waiting at his garden-gate, broad-shouldered, broad-browed, with a big beard of white and yellow.

"Good-morning, papa? How goes it? "

"Good morning, my son. All well with you? . . . Good-morning, Suzele. How pretty you are growing! I scarcely dare to kiss you. . . . Monsieur Reymond, you are very welcome here."

He waved his hand hospitably towards the low house and the garden. Victor Weiss had already gone to greet Catherine by the fountain.

"Catherine! my good old Catherine! . . . What, not married yet? I have an old fellow at Friedensbach for you. . . . He is sixty-eight and hale and hearty. A word, and the business can be settled. I will marry you and my daughter on the same day."

Catherine laughed, her arms akimbo, her cap awry over one ear. Thrusting out her chin towards Reymond, she whispered:

"Is he the man?"

"No, no! He is a Swiss. . . . Oh! of course he is infinitely superior to Kraut and Kummel, but I must have a suitor who has been drinking our Alsatian kirsch for at least twenty years."

"Breakfast! Breakfast!" cried the grandfather.

The breakfast-table was a masterpiece, with its capacious milk-jug, its portly coffee-pot, its honeycomb, its loaf, its preserve, its basket of strawberries. Two doves cooing in a cage filled the house with their amorous melancholy.

"How delightful it all is, grandpapa!" said Suzanne. "How happy we two will be all alone together for a week! How I am looking forward to working in the garden with Catherine!" said Suzanne.

"Yes, my Suzele," said the grandfather; "this is your place, by me. Monsieur Reymond . . . Victor. And don't let us forget that it is Sunday today. I will

ask a blessing from on high. My God, bless this food which Thou givest us abundantly, and grant that we may use it with joy and thankfulness, and to Thy glory."

They attacked the bread, the milk, the coffee, the honey, the preserve, the strawberries. Reymond did not talk much. He looked about, he listened to these Alsatians, three generations which had remained faithful to the speech of the province: the patois, harsh, hoarse, like the sound of pebbles whirled along by a torrent, and breaking into this suddenly, French of the Alsatian variety with its leisurely, good-humoured rhythms. The grandfather gave all the Milchpach news.

"Kramm died on Wednesday. He was buried on Friday. . . . Old Salome is ill. . . . Grot the poacher has put a charge of small shot into his left shoulder. Moscher's son is going to marry a Colmar waitress. There is a great to-do in the family. And there is a new chemist at the factory, a very agreeable young man, a well-bred fellow. One of us, of course. He might perhaps do for Suzele. . . . I must invite him to come here one of these days."

"Grandpapa! Do you really think it is essential one should marry?"

"Yes, when one is a pretty girl like you, with a complexion like pink heather. Certainly. And you must have ten children hanging to your skirts."

"And what would you say if I told you some fine

morning that I was going to be a nurse in the hospital at Mulhouse? "

Weiss was alarmed.

"Never! There are plenty of old maids in the world for that business."

"Never? "

Father and daughter, both self-willed creatures, looked each other in the eyes challengingly.

"Peace, peace," counselled the grandfather. "My chemist will drive out these modern ideas."

Taking advantage of a pause, the doves began to coo again. Roses peeped in at the window. Catherine appeared to clear the table.

"To think there was a time, my good Catherine," said Weiss with mischief in his eyes, "when you used to carry me about in your arms. I shall soon have my revenge. When you become childish, I will carry you about and take care of you."

The old servant laughed, her hands on her stomach. Her faithful face, clean and shining, neatly framed in grey plaits, was radiant. She wiped her eyes.

"Always full of fun, Monsieur Victor."

"Father," said Weiss, "your clock simply gallops. In half an hour we must be off to Reichburg, as I wrote. Next Sunday, when I come to fetch Suzele, we will spend the whole day together. Stay! I have an idea, father. Show Monsieur Reymond the cupboard in the loft. I want him to understand our country."

"The cupboard in the loft?" repeated Reymond.

"Follow us. . . ."

There were piles of wood, a corn-bin, some tools. Between the beams of the roof spiders were sleeping, hanging at the end of a thread. Roused from their slumbers, they hurried off to their retreats, their slender legs working hurriedly. Two dormer-windows opened on to the blue of the Vosges. In the penumbra, the old man looked like a ghost. Only his forehead and his beard were visible. Slowly, opening the door of a secret place hidden in the thickness of the wall, he took out a flag on a gilded standard.

"The flag you see here floated over this house to celebrate the fall of Sebastopol. How many times I hoisted it! And for the last forty years it has been languishing here . . . waiting, waiting!"

Weiss ran to his father, seized the flag, strode to one of the windows, and waved the tricolour frantically over the sunlit roof. For a moment there was an additional flash of light in the peaceful garden, like the reflection of a flame, like a bit of sky falling among the flowers. "Jesus Maria!" Standing between two rose-trees, old Catherine clasped her hands.

"Victor! Victor!" cried the grandfather.

Returning to his daughter, Weiss wrapped the flag about her. For a moment, with dilated eyes, beating hearts, and constricted throats, they thought that their dream had come down to Alsatian earth.

The grandfather was the first to recover.

"Enough, enough! it is too cruel. . . . But *you* will see it, perhaps."

He rolled the flag reverently round the standard, and replaced it.

"And here is the mother's spinning-wheel. How it used to sing to us, night after night, by the big stove! . . . And now it also is silent, like her who used to wind its thread. . . . What a mournful thing life is! . . . Do you remember, Victor, how she used to recite *Beau papillon bleu* to you? Ah! no more of that. And here are the epaulettes of my uncle, one of Napoleon the Great's officers, and his Saint Helena medal. . . . And here are the family papers, proclamations of the Kings of France to their subjects, and notices issued by the Mayor, all signed Weiss — four generations of Mayors — all with the French stamp. . . . The *képi* of my brother, a Colonel of light infantry, killed at Magenta. How many times I have shown my herbarium of memories to my grandchildren. They will show them to their sons. Tradition is the food of the soul."

When Weiss and Reymond left the old house, they saw the grandfather, leaning on his grand-daughter, and old Catherine, waving farewell to them from the threshold for some time.

"We might be starting for America!" said Weiss. "Well, Reymond, you have now seen the sanctuary of an Alsatian family. You will find such sanctuaries everywhere, in the home of the peasant as in that of the workman: a medal, a cockade, a *képi*, the certificate of the sons

who died in the Foreign Legion. They are our lightning-conductors against the German thunderbolts. And now let us go to see another bit of Alsace."

Weiss turned round on the top of the hill. He showed the gardens of Milchpach at his feet.

"Look at those flowers. . . . In spite of their decrees, they cannot prevent Nature from embroidering our flag every summer on each garden, each cornfield, each meadow. . . . Red, white, and blue! . . . Nature does not like black!"

Vine-clad hillsides. Overlooking the plain is Reichburg, a village where those who were laid to rest some four or five centuries ago will rise when the trumpet sounds, walk unsurprised through the familiar street, push open the well-known door, and find the house just as they left it when they were carried out feet foremost. An encircling wall with battlements, machicolations, watch-towers, posterns, and drawbridges; within this enclosure, a curious jumble of roofs full of dormer-windows, weathercocks, façades streaked with painted beams, pulleys with hanging ropes awaiting their load of dry vine-branches, and paved streets winding crookedly, now almost choked by the protuberant houses, now widening into misshapen squares. A nest of sticks and twigs, of course, on the top of a gable, where the stork, in a black-and-white waistcoat, claps his beak; and rusty signs, balconies with balustrades, tiny windows, a thousand whimsies in wood and stone, useless staircases, a flight of

steps fit for a mansion leading up to a shanty, and overhanging upper storeys so close that lovers can kiss each other from opposite windows by leaning out a little.

Reymond was enchanted. Said Weiss:

"Do you think that the descendants of the burghers who built Reichburg and declaimed in their underground cellars against the robber barons are ripe for slavery? . . . But let us make haste. I hear a sound of forks already."

Under the archway leading to Klug's house, Reymond halted in amazement. . . . Was there ever such a house? Three irregular façades, mullioned windows, gargoyles with great gaping mouths; an external staircase, continued in a turret, the well with its bucket and chain; round this well, falling on the pavement from above, patches of sunshine jagged by the inequalities of the roof, and slashed by the cornices — the whole baked by summer heats, worn by the rain, invaded by green mosses. And at the moment, the lively sounds and gay colours of a *kermesse* in this courtyard, tables spread for a feast, on which bottles glittered, loaves were piled, soup-tureens were smoking; women ran about fetching provisions, and strapping fellows with florid faces and abrupt gestures smoked and spat and laughed in stentorian tones.

Hereupon Klug hurried forward, bearded and brawny, holding out two mighty hands to the new arrivals. Oaths were rapped out around them, like blows on the table.

"Good-day, Weiss. Good-day, Monsieur. You are heartily welcome. Are you hungry? Are you thirsty?

. . . That's right! No introductions here! We make friends over the roast. Gentlemen! (his voice would have carried to a whole brigade) Babele has waved her apron. It is the signal for the attack. Be seated, all of you."

There was a shout of approval. The landowners sat down first: Guhlmann, his huge pink chin resting on his mauve neck-tie; Krebs, whose liquid eye probed the depths of the kitchen; Ammerberger, his hands devoutly clasped over his stomach; and then Weiss, and Reymond, and several others. After these, the vine-dressers hurried to their places. There was a clatter of iron-shod boots, and then an alignment of white beards, grey beards, fair moustaches like rays of sunshine on the ruddy faces. And all looked at the master without servility, after the manner of men united in a vigorous fraternity.

All bent silently over the menu with its border of naked children at play. It ran as follows: *Potage à la reine. Asperges. Truites au bleu, sauce hollandaise. Pommes nature. Vol au vent Toulouse. Choucroûte garnie à l'Alsacienne. Gigot de chevreiul. Salade. Buissons d'écrevisses. Bombe. Biscuit. Fromages assortis. Fruits. Dessert. Café. Liqueurs. Cigares. And wines too numerous to mention. Good appetites, gentlemen!*

Before each plate stood seven glasses, ranging from the tall, slim beaker and the shallow, cup-like goblet to the sturdy tumbler, squatting democratically on its broad base; for are there not the strong red wines, and those

which must spread and sparkle, and those which love to cream and foam in a glass as narrow as a ring?

Suddenly there was a noise, discreet at the table of the masters, unsparing at that of the vine-dressers: the soup was served. And it was really fine to see these faces baked by the sun, the napkins spread out like banners, the rhythm of chests and elbows at work, the lips sucking the moustaches. The guests looked at each other peaceably, and said very little. They were waiting calmly for the moment when the soul of the bottles, entering into them, should animate their hearts and loosen their tongues. To be the guest of Joseph Klug of Reichburg is no sinecure, as is notorious. Those permitted to reduce the mountains of asparagus at his table to molehills have to be serious men and not those talk-mills who do not know how to attack good victuals. They looked at each other again, their lips delicately greasy.

The wives of the vine-dressers, their sleeves rolled up, brought out the dishes of sauer-kraut, garnished with slices of bacon and voluptuously rounded sausages. And with them was Lina, the belle of Reichburg, who handed the sauces with modest downcast eyelids, perhaps to show off the length of her lashes. When she deigned to raise them, she revealed eyes of such a soft blue that it melted one's heart. Weiss gallantly hummed a song about cornflowers and summer skies. And Lina smiled as she glided along the tables bending her plump neck and fair plaits.

"Do you see that tall young fellow over there?" said Klug to Weiss, "the one with the black moustache, who follows Lina about with his eyes? He is her betrothed, Gustave Badwiller. They became engaged a week ago, when the leaves were stripped. Ah! there was a good deal of anger and jealousy among the Reichburg lads! Lina hasn't a penny, but she knows her business. And what a pair of eyes!"

The guests were cheerful. They sipped the wines. Nostrils dilated as the bouquet reached them. Lips were smacked, and eyes looked up ecstatically to the weather-cock on the turret.

"This is Kitterlé of 1900. . . ."

"This Riesling is good, but it wanted just another touch of sun."

"As for me, I always come back to Riquewihr. It's a treat for the nose as well as the palate."

And after the manner of men who spend the whole year bending over the vine-stock, they distinguished between the "throat-wines" and the "tongue-wines," for there are some which must be rolled on the tongue and others which caress the uvula.

"You know a really civilized man by the way he drinks wine," said Weiss. "Beer is just gulped; it drowns thirst. But wine must be tasted. There is mentality in this, all the soul of a territory, all the colour of a race."

They questioned Reymond concerning the brands of his canton. From the manner in which he vaunted Déza-

ley, Villeneuve, La Côte, and Yvorne, they judged him worthy to taste the wines of Alsace. Kruger held his head high, and he listened to the compliments of his guest with the expression of a playwright whose piece is applauded.

What viands! And the walnut-oil salad, gathered that morning, and the tarragon sauces! Every minute there was a procession of women coming along by the covered staircase bearing fresh dishes and new bottles. And Lina's smile was fresher than a rose blooming on the top of a wall.

Meanwhile the thermometer was visibly rising. Napkins, pulled out from waistcoats, lay on the table between bowls of fruit and decanters of kirsch. Jokes were bandied in patois. Sweeping gestures, hilarious faces, shining foreheads, beatitude in the eyes. . . . A sign from Gustave Badwiller to his sweetheart. He took her by the waist, and there they were pirouetting on the pavement of the old courtyard, beating out the time with their heels, forehead to forehead, Lina's red apron flaming in the sun and dying down in the shade. . . . Shoulders shook with good-natured laughter. One of the vine-dressers took a mouth-organ from his pocket and played a pathetic air, ending in a burst of roguish notes. The audience applauded lustily through rings of tobacco smoke. And high above, in the arch of heaven, a flight of pigeons flecked the blue with snow.

"It's beginning, it's beginning!" cried Weiss. "Long live Alsace! All goes well, but *es word noch besser wenn*

emol d'Schwobe zuém Land üse geworfé sénn; yes, yes, it would be better still if the Schwobs were turned out of the country! "

And he related one of those popular tales which in Alsace have the faculty of spontaneous generation.

" Speaking of Schwobs, do you know this story? It was in Paradise, at the beginning of the world. The Almighty had so much to do that he commissioned Saint Peter to finish the creation of humanity. Saint Peter was quite a good hand at the work. He took the different parts from a basket, fitted them together, and screwed them fast. A tap under the chin and the man set out for the country allotted to him. However, the work requires great precision. Saint Peter became tired. And then he made mistakes, giving one man two stomachs, and no heart, and another two hearts and two stomachs. Such things may happen. . . . Saint Peter noted the disaster. What was to be done? He approached the Almighty. He admitted his carelessness and said: 'Can we make use of these two men?' The Almighty considered; He bowed His head. Then suddenly He decreed: 'The man with two hearts you are to put in Alsace; one of the hearts will be for Alsace and the other for France; the two stomachs shall be for himself. As to the man who has no heart and two stomachs, you can put him on the other side of the Rhine and call him a Schwob.' "

Such stories, born in the hearts of an oppressed people, yet without bitterness, have a knack of diverting their

hearers. They laughed heartily, so heartily that they became thirsty again, and had to empty another glass of Kitterle. And the vine-dressers, too, had their stories, a legacy from the old folks. They laughed again till they cried, with that deep, healthy, mighty laughter known to Rabelais' heroes, which breaks out like a torrent, dies down, breaks out again, till the cheek-bones glisten, tears stand in the eyes, the veins make an arabesque on the forehead; and when it is over the laugher feels lighter, fresher, and fitter, ready to return to his daily task.

Presently they were playing skittles under a vast pergola covered with climbing roses in Klug's garden. The perfume of the roses mingled with the perfume of the vine-blossom, the June heat quivered on the roofs of Reichburg. The stork clapped his beak indefatigably on the top of his gable; girls and boys passed along the roads, holding each other by the little finger, and humming pensive airs; blue shadows accumulated in the hollows of the valleys, and the bells beat their wings in their stone nests. How pleasant it was that Sunday afternoon in the old peasant's garden, with its roses, its columbines, its huge cabbages, its strawberries, its reddening cherries! The whole garden was a burst of laughter, from which a tom-cat, roused from his siesta, prudently retired.

"Ah!" said one of the notables of Reichburg, "one is happy enough up here . . . if it were not . . . if it were not for . . ."

He left his sentence unfinished.

"If it were not for the phylloxera . . ." suggested Weiss.

"Yes, if you like. . . . But one can sulphur-spray that, whereas it would have no effect on those I have in my mind."

Patois and French collided, while the ball rolled along the plank, and the skittles collapsed with a clanking sound.

Seven o'clock struck from the belfry. And the guests were again seated in the court round the table, where pies arched their brown backs, and bottles raised their slender necks in line. There was singing and toasting. Each one hastened to proclaim his joy to the evening sky, for the company was about to break up.

And now a scene of amazing simplicity took place. The door of the archway was closed. They were thoroughly at home, among safe men. Weiss whispered something to Klug, and Klug called his son, a little boy of ten. The child ran off. A minute later he was seen opening the window in the turret; then he disappeared again; suddenly, as at the elder Weiss's house, the flag floated out, the flag that is kept in the secret cupboard. At the sight of it all were silent, all rose, and all uncovered, notables and vine-dressers alike. What a silence! And all eyes were fixed on the swaying colours. At the end of the courtyard the women, with the fair Lina among them, also gazed at it. And during this silence Gustave Badwiller proclaimed in his stentorian voice, in

patois, that he was about to address the flag in French. In French? There was amazement among those who knew the man, for he had no knowledge of France or of her language; he had served under the conqueror in some distant province, where his alertness had won him his sergeant's stripes. Every one looked at Badwiller, anxious and agitated. But his keen eyes were turned on the flag with magnificent intensity, as if an instinct were rising from his heart, a mysterious impulse. His breast heaved under the effort, the sweat stood out on his forehead. Twice the vine-dresser essayed to speak, seeking words, holding out his hands, splendid in his mute distress. Then suddenly the cry escaped him:

"Long live France, *Noun de Dié!*"

He sat down heavily, exhausted.

Never had Reymond heard a finer speech — and he had listened to a great many in the inns of his native land.

The guests pressed each other's hands. They took leave. Weiss and Reymond left the roofs of Reichburg, the vine-clad slopes, behind them. The Swiss and the Alsatian walked arm in arm. And to give rhythm to their march under the stars, they, too, exclaimed: "Long live France, *Noun de Dié!*"

VIII

"GOOD-BYE, Monsieur, till the autumn. . . . You must write to us."

Basle, Olten, Berne, and finally the radiant country that is mirrored in Lake Leman.

On this August day Aunt Emma, and all the Reymonds, father, mother, brothers, and sisters, were making holiday in honour of the absent one's return. They were on their way to Le Bouveret. An Italian band was playing on board the steamer, gay with innumerable parasols. Every one was smiling, lulled by the sound of the wheels churning the blue waters. The mountains were dreaming in the summer vapour. All was calm. The flags on the roofs of the hotels seemed too inert to float. Only those on the steamer shook out their colours, making bright spots of colour that danced in reflections on the waves. Yes, all was calm, all was lovely; it seemed as if that azure lake could never have known a storm, could never have drowned any one. And the band was playing *Funiculi-Funicula.*

"It is splendid!" said Aunt Emma, throwing back her veil. "Look at the tourists, how pleased they are!"

Monsieur Reymond senior was keeping anxious watch over his basket of provisions, round which an Englishwoman's poodle had been sniffing. He replied:

"Yes, splendid! But this poodle is a nuisance!"

Setting the basket between his legs, he repeated: "It's splendid!"

Reymond thrust out his chin towards a man who was standing near the bell of the steamer and scrutinizing the horizon.

"Well?"

"That is one of the police officers of Mulhouse Station. I recognize him perfectly. He questioned me twice."

"He's having his holiday; it's natural enough," opined Monsieur Reymond.

And Aunt Emma added: "You don't suppose he is spying on people who are taking a rest on a steamer in Switzerland?"

"I didn't say he was spying. I said that at Mulhouse . . ."

"Well, when they come to our country, we can't prevent them from having a look round. It's their right. They pay for their places in the train; they pay for their meals in the hotels; they are well dressed. There is nothing against them. As to war in the twentieth century, what folly!"

"You will see! Monsieur Weiss, of whom I have told you, and Monsieur Bohler too, who is continually travelling in Germany, who knows it well, and hears what is being said, believe we shall have it sooner than we think."

These austere words distress Aunt Emma, whose hat, with its wreath of white lilac, droops mournfully.

"We must not take too gloomy a view of things. Anyhow, every one loves Switzerland; we need only look

round the deck of this steamer to be sure of that."

Monsieur Reymond is fond of an argument.

"All those who come back from abroad are full of these blood-curdling tales . . . spies, riots, and suchlike. It is to startle quiet folks. Nations prepare for war nowadays; they don't declare it. Bankers lend their money to the whole world. One people visits another. No; war is no longer possible."

"War is infamous!" sighed Aunt Emma. "I prefer my lake."

"I once went through your Alsace by train," continued Monsieur Reymond. "Of course, it was wrong of the Germans to take it. But, after all, there is a good deal of exaggeration on the subject. Nobody is killed there. Work goes on steadily, industry prospers."

"Yet Monsieur Weiss's eldest son died during his term of military service. He was infamously treated. And so you think it can be pleasant to leave one's country for ever? In a year both my pupils will go."

Aunt Emma was touched.

"But they will come back for holidays?"

"Certainly not."

"Poor boys!"

Monsieur Reymond offered a solution:

"The Alsatians are to be pitied, undoubtedly. But you will see that sooner or later, to quench this fire of discontent, they will be given autonomy, or perhaps their country will be made neutral. There are a hundred alternatives to war."

The Englishwoman's dog returned slyly to the charge, Monsieur Reymond kicked out valiantly in defence of his basket.

There was a silence. They admired the gentle, smiling shore, the rippling bays. Aunt Emma shuddered.

"Let us bless Providence who guards us from suffering. Let us cultivate peace. Let us strive to reconcile these foreigners. We have a noble part to play."

Madame Reymond has seven children. She is a good wife, a good mother. A cry comes from her heart:

"After all, they must be harsh to separate mothers from their sons!"

Quivering under the kisses of the sun, the bays seem to repeat incredulously: "They must indeed be harsh. . . ."

The police officer is standing near the bell. The Italian shakes the pence in his tray. The band plays the *Valse bleue*.

IX

REYMOND returned. Nothing was changed. The Rhine rolled its green waters; the factories poured out their smoke. The Black Forest, the blue Vosges; between them, the garden of the plain; the little train whistled, puffed, ran along the narrow valley on the bank of the river with its rippling waters. On the station platform stood the station-master in his red cap, the policeman in his spiked helmet. A hill is turned, and then another. The belfry of Friedensbach rises above the trees. And here is the chubby coachman, and Jean and René, hat in hand, very amiable, and a little shy.

"Have you had pleasant holidays, Monsieur?"

"Yes, thank you. And you? How are your parents?"

While the horses were trotting along, they exchanged these dismal conventionalities. They had all looked forward so much to meeting again, and now they were separated by these two months of holidays during which their eyes and minds had been turned on different landscapes and dissimilar preoccupations. Between tutor and pupils there was all the distance that separates a seaside resort in Normandy and the Swiss glaciers. There was a disappointed silence. They felt that they must leave the task of picking up the threads again to

the days to come. When people live together, then everything, sky, trees, men with their speech and gestures, conspire to create anew the desired unity.

The same porter, the same court filled with the eternal buzz of the machines, the same heads bowed behind the same windows of the same office. Old Julie greets Reymond from her kitchen. "We are glad to have you back," says Madame Bohler. One thread is picked up. In the schoolroom the map, the statue of Jeanne d'Arc, the globe, the books; on the blackboard these words in capital letters: "July 16. The holidays. Long live France!" Reymond's chair is in the embrasure, whence one can see the road leading to the forest, the glades where the broom-bushes grow. And here objects come to meet you. The eyes that observe you regain their look of confidence. The valley takes you to its heart again.

"The joyous band of Wednesdays and Saturdays will be much reduced," said Madame Bohler. "André Berger and Emile Zumbach, who are very much tied to their technical school, are only to come home on Sundays. On the other hand, Charles Weiss will join our boys as often as the college curriculum allows. In another year we shall close this schoolroom. René might stay with us a little longer, but we do not wish to separate the brothers. Only another year!"

"We will come back," declared René; "we will come back with the French army."

And here is Monsieur Bohler, with his faithful face and his white hair, his upright figure, the shyness of a silent

man of action, the brief gestures which seem to build up a fence. With him Alsace, struggle, and hidden suffering, present themselves again. And he repeats:

"In a year . . . in a year. . . . Meanwhile, work hard, boys. . . . The books have come, Monsieur Reymond. Tomorrow at eight o'clock you can open your factory."

They parted. Reymond follows the road, strides over the level crossing, passes the school, where he perceives Kummel, who makes a profound bow. The geese are cackling by the fountain where the pot-bellied god sits enthroned. The boys pursue each other, dragging their sabots along the pavement.

"Jacobine, here he is!"

Old Schmoler is on his threshold, holding out his hand. Jacobine hurries out. And Reymond returns to the bedroom with the closed shutters, the shells, the bed with its cretonne tester and hangings. The dinner-bell. The two tables. *Mahlzeit!* Good-day! Kraut, smug and sanctimonious, his beard on his chest, contemplates the plump widow. Silent and motionless, the officials eat and drink.

"What news is there at Friedensbach? . . ." The Alsatians raise their eyebrows by way of reply. Coquart lights a cigarette with deliberation.

"I am leaving in a week, my dear fellow. This dull hole will be the death of me. I am going back to my seaport."

"How long shall you have been at Friedensbach?"

"Three years. Long enough to atone for all my sins, past, present, and future."

He shrugs his shoulders. Three years of boredom. Three years of recriminations, of disillusioned speeches. The officials retire. *Mahlzeit.*

Coquart giggles.

"I shall make them laugh at La Rochelle with that *Mahlzeit!* It is the only German word I shall carry away. I will declare it at the Custom-house, for fear they should take it from me . . ."

Night falls on the roofs. The policeman's step echoes in the deserted street. The shoemaker's apprentice is playing the concertina. The three generations of Schmoler make remarks in patois. How far away is Lake Leman, with its mountains and its meadows where the cow-bells tinkle!

Reymond asks himself whether he ever left Friedensbach.

The next morning, Reymond, pleased to find that the knowledge acquired by his pupils had not evaporated unduly, made a ministerial pronouncement: they were going to set to work in earnest, and carry off a Bachelor's degree at the point of the bayonet!

"I count upon you, boys. And now, before we begin the attack, we must renew our acquaintance with the Vosges. After which we shall be fit for real good work."

A pale October sunshine played upon the slopes. In the russet woods, where pheasants strutted and startled

hares fled before them, the pedestrians trod on the first leaves of autumn. Sometimes from the blue depths of a glade rose a flock of migratory birds, and one heard the rhythmic beat of hurrying wings and the thrust of feathered breasts against the warm air. A supernatural radiance shone in space.

They came out on a summit bristling with pink rocks, barbed with furze-spines, and red with bilberry foliage. Standing on the lofty peak by his trusty dog, a goatherd was guarding the flocks of Friedensbach — a very old goatherd, incredibly thin, with a short beard like the lichen that grows on aged pines. This Seppi was an original. As long as any one could remember he had been living alone in his cottage at the mouth of the ravine, cooking his soup, mending his clothes, sawing his wood, stacking his faggots, smoking his pipe. In winter he was never seen. Perhaps he hibernated like the marmots. When spring came he blew his cow-horn and went from stable to stable, collecting the goats and kids. He greeted every one he met, even the policeman, with a *Bonjour* (which he pronounced *Bochour*) and a French military salute, placing his open hand against the brim of his rust-coloured hat.

It was said that Seppi was eighty-one years old. Perhaps he was a little more, perhaps a little less. He was known to have wandered all over the world, to have fought in the Crimea and in the Italian campaign, to have enlisted at the age of forty when it had been announced on the market-place that the troops were marching

against Germany. When the war was over he had returned to his annexed valley, more original than ever, talking to himself and smoking incessantly. And now from early spring to late autumn, he was only to be seen from below and from afar, standing on the point of a rock where his thin silhouette was outlined against the grey or the blue of the sky. Last witness of the days of glory, he seemed to be guarding Alsace as well as his goats, set upon the mountain-top like a prophet.

When the three approached him, Seppi made his military salute and said *Bochour*. Reymond offered him a cigar. The old man laughed. His nostrils quivered with pleasure. The dog growled, his muzzle outstretched, snuffing the air, uneasy at the sight of the flocks of birds passing overhead in the golden light, their heads pointing to the west.

"Good-bye!" cried the old man. "My greetings to Marseilles."

"Do you know Marseilles well?" asked Reymond, hoping for a story.

The old man shook his head.

"I know many, many countries — black men, red men, white men. . . . I know the Pas de Calais, principal town Arras. I know Paris . . . I know Algiers. . . . I know Bombay and Calcutta. I know . . . ah! I know all countries."

"And which do you like best?"

"This mountain. I have been standing on it all day for forty years. I talk to my dog, my goats, the rocks,

the trees. In the valley I hold my tongue. It's safer, isn't it, Eugène? "

The dog, squatting upon the moss, barked his assent.

"And you believe, don't you, that Alsace will be French again some day? " asked René.

Seppi was startled by the directness of this question. To give himself time to answer, he sent Eugène after two undisciplined goats, which the dog smartly brought back to the flock. Then the goatherd answered in prudent sibylline phrases, gazing dreamily into space:

"What will be, will be. . . . The weather is fair. The wind rises and the storm is upon us. . . . The beaten man hides. The conqueror draws himself up and holds his head high. . . . A stone, and he falls. Since Napoleon fell, why should not others? All one can do is to smoke one's pipe and hold one's tongue, and wait, wait. Nothing comes. Nothing. And yet it is coming. . . . Some morning . . . some evening . . . sooner or later. I am old. I cannot write. I cannot read. I know nothing of what is going on on this side or on that (Seppi jerked his thumb in the direction of the Vosges and the Rhine). . . . But I say this: when I see this one or that one treating poor folks harshly, I look about on the road for the stone. . . . I do not see it, because my sight is bad, but I know very well that it is where it should be."

The old man laughed softly. Fearful of having said too much, he again sent Eugène in pursuit of wandering members of the flock. His toothless mouth closed. He had said enough for one day.

The three went on, but several times they turned to look again at the old goatherd, the tenacious shadow of a tenacious past, standing in the radiance of the setting sun, wrapped in his rough coat garnished with wallets and flasks that protruded from his meagre form.

So they set to work again with a kind of fury during the monotony of the autumn days.

The bark of the hooters, the gasp of the machines, the clang of wooden shoes on the pavement, are sounds that govern one's life. They seem necessary and eternal. One exists in and by them. One passes from one to the other morning and afternoon. They prescribe a strict discipline.

And the Alsatian drama is forgotten, or rather it is laid aside, shut up in the cupboard with the spinning-wheel and the flag. One must live; and living means getting up in the morning, working, eating, submitting to the order established by force, forming habits, becoming akin to the machines whose steel arms come and go always in one direction and never in another. . . . And all this until the day when things one imagined were dead and buried and mingled with the dust cut you to the heart, and make you spring to your feet with a flame in your eyes. . . . Yet only for a moment. Reality gets the better of you. For one moment that one spends upon the heights, how many weeks and months one crawls upon the soft earth of the plains! Emotion wears one out and kills one. . . . Habit preserves one.

The shuttle flashes, the thread is wound on the reel, the

great frames on which the wool is drying swing, the belts which carry power slip along — everything ascends and descends. These belts seem to have laid hold of your thought, your heart, your desires — everything seems to slip away from you in this supple movement, leaving you in the void, a slave to the familiar act. Weiss expresses it very aptly in his picturesque language: "Heroics twice a year. The rest of the time one turns the handle, holds one's tongue, and carries on in the greyness."

One carries on in the greyness. It is just that.

The autumn draws to an end. White, then blue, now a dirty yellow, the mountains are gathered round the valley. The fog drops down from them like a great bird with outspread wings; its dews are distilled even upon the paunches of the pumpkins. There are baskets under the apple-trees. The walnuts fall in showers, harried by stout cudgels. Early in the morning the woodman goes off, ax on shoulder, to the crimsoning woods. Gee-up! The horses bow their heads and stiffen their legs; another shining furrow lies beside the shining furrows in which the magpies are disporting themselves. Fires in the corners of the field, sending out long streamers of smoke. Children pass along the hedge-rows, gathering hazel-nuts and the coral hips and haws; old men, seated on the doorsteps, fill the mattresses with dry leaves, and grandmothers shell beans wrapped in red or violet sheaths. The potatoes are lifted. One holds communion with the soft silence of evening. The sheet of fog has rolled away; the sun, like a fine red fruit,

is swallowed by the valley behind the mountain. Six o'clock. The peasant raises his head to watch for a minute the black battalion of artisans which the factory has suddenly ejected from all its gates on to the high road. The policeman walks about. All is quiet. The magistrate opens his window. He shuts it again. This land is submissive.

And All Saints' Day is here again, with its bells, its sermon, its procession, its chrysanthemums, its graves which the banners have saluted, drooping over them.

The fog thickens, stretched over the valley like a winding-sheet. According to the hour, it lifts a little, then drops again. One lives under or in it. The river laughs discreetly, and flees from the white curtain which cannot check its clear waters.

The goats are baaing in the stables. Seppi has closed the door of his cottage. But for the smoke from his roof, he might be dead. At eight o'clock and at two o'clock the children come to school, but their wooden shoes make no sound in the soft mud. Kummel stands behind his desk, near the overheated stove. *Dieser, diese, dieses,* echoes the class. Kummel speaks of the German rivers, the German towns, German conquests. His switch comes down. Bader is inattentive. He is turned out of the room. The pedagogue casts a frigid glance at his auditors. All backs are bowed under the Prussian discipline.

The three-twenty train whistles languidly. No one gets out, and no one gets in. It goes off again, and for a moment there is a rattle of iron in the opaque air. . . .

A carriage? Window-curtains are drawn aside. Who is in it? No one can say. This man who is passing with the hood of his cloak pulled up till only the ends of a moustache damp with fog are to be seen is the merchant Maus. Since he "rallied" he has walked in military fashion, with his shoulders high, and he holds his cane as one holds the sheath of a sword. Couah! Couah! The curtains are drawn back again. A motor-car dashes by. There is a dog inside, and a gloved hand strokes its head.

And Coquart has gone. He pressed a few hands at parting. And he said once more as he stood on the footboard of the carriage: "They're all half dead here." This is all he can tell the inhabitants of La Rochelle about Alsace.

The greyness that falls from the sky mingles with that which rises from men's hearts. A gust of wind rends it. It closes up again, thicker than ever. Nevertheless, old Rouf has sharpened his knives. The pig which has just been bound to a trestle weeps, protests, and wriggles his pink belly. His feet fall away stupidly. He is dead. What did his cries avail him? As we know, there is no resisting superior force. They crowd round the defunct, they scrape his carcase after watering it with boiling water, they cut and carve, they compute his weight in sausages and hams. A terror descends upon the world of domestic animals, and on the geese, who make off, stretching out their beaks, and uttering protesting cries. Only the bronze cock screwed to the ball of the fountain is indifferent to this murder! Is he not a permanent

institution? . . . Well, not so permanent, after all, perhaps, for Kummel has thoughts of substituting for him an eagle with a hooked beak and tense claws, like those on the regimental colours. Meanwhile, there will be a feast of pig's puddings at Rouf's this evening.

The fog refuses to lift from the valley. It drinks up sounds, effaces colours, covers everything with its melancholy. It turns the open space in front of the Mairie into a white square bordered by shadowy houses; people move about in it, talking loudly to prove that they still exist. This old woman who has been washing linen in the river is grotesque with her pail upon her shoulder; so, too, are these other women coming out of the factory, their hair heavy with moisture, their shoulders cowering under their shawls. A man lurches against the old woman. He says "Gottverdammi!" and goes off, a ghost among ghosts.

Reymond and his pupils, their foreheads against the panes of the schoolroom window, watch the phantom procession of workmen in the courtyard. Reymond remarks:

"Saturday, pay-day. There will be a fine drinking-bout this evening! At midnight I shall hear Grumbach kicking at his door. His wife never wakes up till he gets to the fiftieth kick. As Grumbach gives one per minute, the neighbours have time to enjoy the serenade."

René laughs loudly. He loves life and noise. He is delighted at the thought of these kicks on a closed door at midnight. Jean pleads extenuating circumstances.

"They are bored, poor fellows! In other places there are theatrical societies, choral unions, all sorts of things. Here one may not declaim what one likes, or play what one likes, or sing what one likes. The policeman pokes his nose in everywhere. They hunt down bugles, and white gaiters, and peaked caps. They forbid and forbid. Only the *Kriegervereine* have free play. . . ."

"What about a library?"

"A library? . . . But, Monsieur, there *is* a library — managed by Kummel! It contains a hundred books, which all declare that France is rotten to the core."

The fog closes in over the last workman. Where are we? . . . In the misery of this eternal twilight only the mud that clings to our shoes assures us that the earth is still under our feet.

"On such a day as this," said René suddenly, "Alsace should be taken back. The French army could slip along to Strasburg. When the sun came out again the tricolour would float on every steeple. The Statthalter would make a fine face!"

Jean, more philosophical, expressed his wonder at the relativity of human things.

"Monsieur, don't you think it must be difficult to be heroic in the fog? One's soul seems to be made of cotton-wool! There is no distance, no substance, no sharp edges. Everything is soft, moist, and viscous. Is there really a country called France? A town called Berlin? Men who walk about with swords slung to their belts? What becomes of words, of principles, and of ideas.

After ten days of fog one is no longer oneself. One gropes and talks low. If humanity had always lived in a fog, what queer creatures we should be — pale, shivering, our arms always stretched out towards a possible obstacle! "

" We should all have become mushrooms," interrupted René. " I should put myself down as a delicious agaric. And I could find a species for a great many others — Kummel, Justice Döring, and the rest! "

Reymond laughed.

" How like the two of you! René, who translates everything into images, robust and combative; and you, Jean, fond of theorizing, sensitive. . . ."

René holds up his head. He has been described as combative. Jean feels that his tutor has hit the nail on the head.

" It's a nuisance to be sensitive, Monsieur. One is at the mercy of fog and sunshine. Kummel cares nothing about the fog. He rides his hobby faithfully from January to December. This may be stupid, but it's strong. Over-impressionable people, those who have too many scruples, are not made to rule."

" Well, I am off now, little dialectician. But please keep your tact and your scruples; I like you better as you are."

Near the level crossing there was a shadow which gesticulated.

" Is that you, Monsieur Weiss? What about the Vosges? When shall we have our next excursion? "

"Don't tantalize me. A winter like this is the worst of tortures!"

Then he took up Jean Bohler's parable:

"If we were ourselves, free, we should have a little theatre, we should get a lecturer to come now and then. But just try anything of the sort! Kummel, Döring, and the policeman, are the Holy Trinity. Rather than undergo remarks, sneers, and rebuffs, we give up everything, and curl ourselves up like hedgehogs. And when the fog comes down on us, it's about the limit! Brrr!"

Truly the journalist who should come to Friedensbach at this juncture to collect heroic sentiments would depart with a blank notebook. Others may play the matadore, standing with arched hip, and hand on this hip. What is the use of talking and declaiming? Does it advance matters at all?

So old Herzog, one of the vanquished of Sedan, hammers at his soles conscientiously. Old Schmoler, one of the vanquished of Woerth, comes and goes in his loft, separates the rotten apples from the sound ones, stops up the hole where the rats get through, cuts up the dry branches and binds them into faggots. One hears him sucking at his pipe. And Jacobine trots from her ironing-board to the saucepan in which the sausage is simmering.

In the restaurant Madame Vogel continues to make omelettes, to taste soups, to lay the table, to smile at customers with a placidity which overcomes the languor of Kraut. Poor Kraut! This fog depresses him more

than any one. Sometimes, after he has been at his figures all the morning, his mind seems to stop dead, like a clock that wants cleaning. During the clink of the forks, which fatigues him, he thinks of retirement. Was a man of his age meant to live alone? He ought to have a wife to keep his wardrobe in order, wrap up his hot water-bottle in flannel, and twine her arms round his conscientious neck. Kraut is not very sure if he made an amicable sign to his hostess. He thinks that he did. . . . The diners have departed. Kraut remains alone under the crackling gas-jet. . . . Should he go into the kitchen? Should he set forth in simple terms his loneliness, the needs of his heart, the amount of his retiring pension? He does not dare. He will never dare. He listens to the song that is rising with the steam from a saucepan. And he goes off, his green hat pulled down on the nape of his neck, his candid eyes full of sadness, his beard moist with fog.

Here he is again. It was really too horrible out of doors; too cold in his bedroom under the tiles. Kraut has made a resolution. He feels within him all the strength of the old Germany which serves God, all the strength of her ancient legends and her modern glory. Bending over the saucepan where the water which is to be used for washing up the dinner things is bubbling, Madame Vogel looks round with her eternal smile of the circumspect hostess. But she starts. For the worthy man is alarming, with his flushed face, his stammering confessions, his light eyes illumined by senile desire.

The handsome widow holds her hands up to heaven, invoking it to witness her refusal.

"Madame Vogel," said old Kraut with sinister calm, "you understand me, don't you? I have earned my pension. . . . If you like, I will keep the accounts of your restaurant. . . . I am used to such work. . . ."

The widow temporizes. With gentle pertinacity, she suggests that Thuringia is full of worthy women. Kraut smiles bitterly.

"Are you refusing me because I am a German?"

In the interests of the restaurant, it seems prudent to evade this question.

"What are you thinking of, Monsieur Kraut? . . . My husband has only been dead two years! If he could hear you!"

Mademoiselle Schmoler comes in innocently. Kraut can but withdraw. His world is crumbling about him: God, the old legends, the young glory of his country. What is the use of administering this country so conscientiously, when its widows refuse the love of veteran officials?

Returning to his cold bedroom under the tiles, Kraut contemplates in turn the bounding dogs in the rounds of his wall-paper, the engravings on the walls showing the Thuringian hills, the Scripture text which says: *The Good Shepherd gives His life for the sheep,* and, above all, it must be said, in a corner in a gilt-frame, the portrait of a lady with fat cheeks, a stupid expression, a white forehead, and a bewildering mass of hair. How

did Kraut get hold of this advertisement for a hair-wash? It is a mystery. How often he looks at it before he goes to sleep! With a firm step, Kraut advances to the lady with the flowing tresses who is so astonishingly like Madame Vogel; he seizes the picture, throws it to the ground, and plants his foot on the pink throat and the soft eyes. The Good Shepherd looks at Kraut sadly. What he is doing is wrong, very wrong. His conscience smites him; he picks up the lady and hangs her on the wall again. The other picture at the end of the room, which shows the German fleet covering the ocean as far as the eye can reach, does not console him in the least. . . . Kraut sits upon his bed, unties his shoes slowly, takes off his coat and waistcoat and his thick flannel jacket; but, as he has a dignity of his own, he does not look at the lady with the generous bosom again.

From that day forth Kraut was embittered. Beer, saveloys, mustard, sauer-kraut, all those divine foods, had a taste of ashes. In the office, papers lay about and accounts would not balance. Kraut was old. His mind was going. Childish memories came back to him with ecstatic violence. To all who inquired after his health he replied:

"I want to go home."

He pronounced these words with tears in his voice, a senile trembling of the lips. Home! . . . It was not in Alsace. It was on the other side of the Rhine. He felt a longing to hide in his mother's skirts as of old. . . . His mother? . . . No; she was dead. Then, he

would hide in the green skirt of the forests where as a child he gathered strawberries with his schoolfellows.

"I want to go home. . . ."

Monsieur Bohler rushes out of the office, a telegram in his hand. It is only eleven in the morning. What has happened to this man, generally such a rigid observer of rules? . . . The house-door slams behind him.

"What is the matter?" asks Madame Bohler in alarm.

"I don't understand it at all. A telegram from Leipzig telling me that Marthe is dead."

Marthe, the orphan niece who, against his strongly expressed wish, had married a banker of that city; Marthe, the fair-haired, happy child who had so often run about this little room and climbed upon the knee of the uncle who had been her second father; Marthe, dead at the age of twenty-five, and about to be buried in foreign earth!

"Marthe!"

"Well, she's had five children in five years! The fifth has killed her. . . . I won't go. In the first place, it's too far. And then . . . No, I won't go."

"You must go, in memory of your brother. Believe me . . . Poor Marthe! Who would have thought it? In the presence of death one can only forgive and pardon."

"Do you think I am angry with the poor child? Does a girl know what she is doing at nineteen? We ought never to have sent her to school in Germany. Were we too hard on her? How could she marry a man who cut

down our soldiers in 1870, and did all he could to promote the theft of our country from us? . . . However, all that belongs to the past, and now she is dead. No, I won't go. I can't go. What sort of a face can I put on before that tribe of Zinglers? It's impossible."

"Go, my dear; trust me."

"No!"

They looked at a photograph of a laughing little girl on the writing table.

"You *must* go, my dear."

"No!"

Monsieur Bohler went away. His white head was seen passing through the courtyard.

Of course, he started that very evening. He was away two days. When he returned he had not much to say.

"They behaved very well. The husband was quite crushed. He was devoted to her. It was just as I thought. She died at the birth of her fifth child, which has survived. Poor little Marthe! They showed me a portrait of her, a very good likeness, surrounded by the portraits of four or five generations of Zinglers, nearly all in uniform. It made me think of a picture stolen in war-time. . . . It rained incessantly. . . . Ah! don't let us talk about this any more."

Monsieur Bohler became silent. And his wife, who understood him, asked no more questions. What he did not tell her — for he was a man of action who would not confess that he was sentimental — was that he had taken

with him a handful of earth from Alsace, which he had thrown upon the coffin in the churchyard.

January. Rain and mud. The water overflowed from the gutters. Such a winter had never been known. The smoke of the factories was beaten back, and fell in malediction on the earth.

Suzanne Weiss has gone to Paris to stay with a cousin, and with her all the gaiety of Friedensbach has departed.

And the wool trade is depressed. Monsieur Bohler is in a savage temper. In the schoolroom the work goes on according to the prescribed program: translation of Horace, Livy, Tacitus, Herodotus, and Plato, study of the French Revolution, readings in Racine, Bossuet, and Voltaire, after which Jean seizes his violoncello and René his expanders. For René wants to be an officer, and he is bent on developing his muscles. He is now at the fourteenth exercise in his gymnastic treatise. For an hour every evening he works at his torso, throws his arms backward and his legs forward, lifts weights twenty and thirty times in succession. The two brothers wrangle, their nerves on edge:

"When will you stop that caterwauling with your 'cello?"

"When you stop making faces and squatting on your heels."

"Anyhow, we shan't drive the Germans out of Alsace by playing the 'cello."

"Little idiot!"

"Big idiot!"

The conversation continues on these lines till the father's step is heard, and silence falls on the pair.

In the evening the family sit in the little drawing-room. On one occasion the two boys had been told to write a few lines on this subject: *My First Literary Emotion.* They scanned the book-shelves feverishly, glancing at the childish books now despised, the books of adventure, of science, and of sentiment. On the upper shelf are the volumes the boys are forbidden to open, whose titles they may not even read. . . . Madame Bohler is writing letters. Her husband smokes behind his newspaper. The intermittent smoke, the scratching of the busy pen, the flutter of a page, the tick-tack of the clock, accentuate the tranquillity of the warm room. Jean and René in their turn sit down to write, groaning, erasing, making fair copies. At last they have finished.

"Show me what you have written," says Monsieur Bohler suddenly.

"Please don't read it aloud!" the two boys implore.

"What nonsense! Jean's first."

"'A few pages of my first history book will linger in my mind as long as I live. The mission of Peter the Hermit, the crowd, carried away by him, crying, "God wills it!" all, careless of their lives, burning with avenging zeal, leaving family, home, and country to march against the Infidel. The story filled me with enthusiasm, gave me sublime ideas. I gazed at the illustration in the

text for minutes together; it showed a rocky path, an arid land, an interminable procession of men going to battle in a far-off country. At this time — I was eight years old — I often went off with a little bread in a wallet. I went on the highroad, I walked, artlessly offering the sacrifice of my life, until the moment when our nurse overtook me and shook me vigorously. . . . A literary emotion was born of the association of ideas. At eight years old I already expected the French every day; I saw them on one of the peaks of the Vosges, crying, "God wills it!" and this was so glorious that when I turned to my history again I put a beauty into it which was absent from the dry text.'"

Monsieur Bohler was silent. It was Madame Bohler who said:

"Bravo, Jean! Now for René's effort."

"'As long as I live I shall always maintain that Jules Verne is wonderful. He is literary because he suggests such masses of things. . . . Does he write well? . . . I don't know, but I do know that he ennobles one. With him one travels to the moon, one journeys twenty thousand leagues beneath the sea, one invents machines. All modern inventions (submarines, motor-cars, wireless telegraphy) are in Jules Verne. These things are literary, because to mount through space, to plunge under the sea, to hover over worlds, excites emotion, makes one dream, feeds the imagination. And, above all, they are literary because with those contraptions we shall recover Alsace-Lorraine.'"

There was a peal of laughter at the conclusion of this essay. René reddened angrily. He thought he was being ridiculed.

"He *is* wonderful. Mine is the best. . . . Besides, I don't know what you mean by literary. . . . I am scientific."

Madame Bohler soothed his irritation with a word.

"Come, come; we are not ridiculing you when we laugh. Your composition is very good. Kiss me, my sons, and go to bed."

The door closes. The parents look at each other with emotion. Monsieur Bohler, by no means optimistic as a rule, says:

"Our boys are splendid. . . . And when I say our boys, I am speaking generally. I hear echoes of the same sort everywhere. There is something in their hearts. They have muscles. Yes, yes, Kummel and Co. must look out for themselves!"

"I hope you are not very much bored here, Monsieur Reymond?" Madame Bohler would say occasionally.

"Not in the least, Madame."

Reymond's reply is not strictly true. This winter has seemed much longer to him than the first. Friedensbach has given up all its secrets to him; the old people have told him all their stories. Where is that heroic Alsace he expected to discover?

Kummel undertakes to put a little spice into this drowsy peace. He has a visitor, his brother, Walther

Kummel, who lives at Nancy, Paris, Brussels, Cologne, and Berlin, one month here and another there, for his business makes it necessary that he should travel a good deal. What is that business? . . . Strasburg and Metz see him frequently, as do Belfort and Epinal, the frontier towns for choice. This Walther Kummel speaks English, Italian, and French as fluently as his mother-tongue. Agreeable, insinuating, his cigar-case always well stocked, he sees a great many people, and is an adept in making them talk. People say of him: "He is a charming person."

So he has come to Friedensbach to visit his brother, his seven nephews and nieces, his sister-in-law, Anna Kummel, who always wears an embroidered apron over her black skirt, and sings so sweetly in her kitchen: *Mein Herz ist ein Bienenhaus.* . . . For a few days his bony head, his keen, shifty eyes, and his flat cheeks, were much in evidence. The magistrate greeted him with a low bow, the policeman with one still lower. Then he went off to Paris, where business was waiting for him. Schoolmaster Kummel, it may be presumed, refreshed himself at this fountain, for after his brother's departure his patriotism was exacerbated, as if in obedience to orders.

One morning, when Reymond had been unable to attend during his pupils' lesson with Kummel, he found them furious, brandishing a paper and exclaiming both at once:

"Just read that, Monsieur! We are to translate it into German. It's disgusting!"

Reymond took the paper and read:

"'GERMANY THE CENTRE OF EUROPE.

"'Not only by her geographical situation, but also by her moral importance, our dear country is the centre of Europe. When we consider our neighbours, we find in them faults so characteristic as to be undeniable. The English are incapable of producing scientists, whereas our country justly prides herself on a host of chemists, physicists, and mathematicians of the highest talent. Do not our Universities shed rays of light even in the remotest regions of the earth? It must be admitted that the French and the Belgians have a certain spirit of invention. But their frivolity and indifference prevent them from following up their discoveries and profiting by them. If they had our depth of character they would approximate somewhat to this German people to whom you belong. Whereas in Germany every official, from the highest to the lowest, does his duty, we see among our neighbours the greatest disorder in the whole administration, and an absolute lack of patriotism. The Italians are too passionate to be able to judge calmly. Reason, the supreme quality which governs all our enterprises, cannot be the guide of our impetuous neighbours.

"'We scarcely dare to dwell upon the ignorance and idleness of the Russians, and of the negligence which

reigns throughout their vast empire! These various defects are so essential that the civilization of the nation is totally arrested thereby, and that their moral level will never come up to ours unless they seek inspiration in our institutions. Then that new Europe of which Germany will be more than ever the heart, the vital organ, will march towards progress. And we shall sing once more: *Deutschland über Alles!*"

Reymond only asked:

"Did you say anything?"

"No, indeed. Father has forbidden us to argue."

"He's quite right. But show him this paper all the same."

That very evening, after his lesson, Reymond tackled Kummel.

"Monsieur, I have read the paper you dictated to my pupils. Don't you think it would be better to abstain from these controversial . . . or shall we say political themes? Yours is the greatest nation on earth, we know. Is it necessary . . ."

Kummel did not wait for the conclusion of the sentence. His face was flushed. The hair bristled on his pointed skull. His eyes gleamed with prophetic brilliance behind his spectacles.

"Pardon me, it is our duty to proclaim the truth *urbi et orbi*, as you professors of Latin would say. Do not let us confine ourselves to generalizations. I will deal with facts. In Germany the yearly birth-rate is one million

eight hundred thousand. In France it falls annually at the rate of one hundred thousand. What does this mean but that the great nation, France, the boss (don't you say?) of the Universe, is terribly afraid to live, as one of our great writers has well said? . . . Well, travel, open your eyes, cross our frontier. . . . As soon as you get to Belfort everything is dirty. Newspapers and orange-peel on the ground, windows dim with dust. And everywhere bare-headed women, 'creatures' as you call them. The industry is childish, the trade patriarchal. On the whole, the conception of things is mediaeval.

"I saw the Alsace we delivered from the champions of civilization. What neglect! What disorder! Yes, we must tell the truth. England is the leech of the world. She must be crushed. Italy plays the guitar, Spain the mandoline. Russia? . . . She has a louse on every hair! Austria is something, thanks to us. And the poor Alsatian standing on his ladder looks out beyond the Vosges. He says: 'Sister Anne, Sister Anne, do you see anything coming?' And I reply: 'Nothing but disorder, anarchy, sensuality, quarrels, alcohol, and the like.' That is what they call Liberty.

"We Germans desire to regenerate the world, to introduce civilization and happiness. For we have pity on the world. This is the true *Idealismus*. Listen to what one of our most cultured men has to say on this subject. I cut it out of my newspaper. 'We Germans defend the ideal of the fraternity of nations, of the world-State which shall embrace all humanity, the super-German,

the eternal-human, the cosmic, the infinite aspiration towards the holy empire of living order in a free organization, the symphony of the forces of life in the heart of nations. Now, this is no new ideal, but the most ancient of all, universally human and cosmic, the Oriental, mediaeval, and Romanesque ideal of one in all, of unity in number and number in unity. . . . Germany is the sole faithful disciple of this Absolute, which we shall impose by persuasion, if heads are not too hard, and by force if persuasion fails.'

"There! Do you understand now?"

The hair still bristled on the pointed skull.

"Do you understand?" repeated the pedagogue, with a sort of sacred fury.

What could Reymond reply? It is impossible to argue against faith. He murmured: "It's magnificent."

The schoolmaster smiled.

"The time is at hand."

That evening they went no further.

Monsieur Bohler held the famous paper in his hand; he settled his glasses on his nose, and began to read with a severe, authoritative air. All of a sudden he broke into a hearty laugh, very unusual with him.

"It's mystical delirium. . . . I will give this paper to my friends of France; it's worth while to read it. Pride is turning their heads. A kind of intoxication. . . . Well, let them eat, devour, digest nations; they will die of it in the end."

Monsieur Bohler rubbed his hands.

Weiss's eldest son François, who was studying law at Strasburg, and was also attending a course at the Faculty of Letters in an inquiring spirit, came home to spend Sunday with his family. At dinner, between the tart and the coffee, Kummel's theme was read aloud. The only one of the guests — Reymond was present, also the chemist Gangloff, and the engineer Ballenhofer — who did not smile was François Weiss. And he explained why.

"You seem surprised? That's the sort of stuff they feed us on at the University."

As they looked incredulous, he rose, and went to fetch from his room a book called *Gedanken und Wahrnehmungen*, by the novelist G. Gröber. He opened it and read: "'The Englishman is a prosaic boor, the American a vile commercialist, the Spaniard a degenerate, the Italian a voluptuary and idler, the Frenchman a debauchee, a frivolous and superficial trifler.' And he goes on in this strain page after page, to prove that Germany is the only strong nation, that there is no science but German science, no philosophy and no religion save German philosophy and German religion."

François Weiss continued:

"I have heard our professors dozens of times engaged on the ridiculous task of waging war upon French Christian names, and formally denying the existence of a French literature and French poetry. Victor Hugo says nothing in a great many words. Chateaubriand is a

bombastic rhetorician. There is only one French writer worthy of attention, and he, again, is a Swiss of German affinities, J. J. Rousseau. They assert habitually that the French don't know their own language and pronounce it badly; that only the Germans speak French correctly, because they know grammar and phonetics. . . . The favourite pastime of these gentlemen, with only one or two exceptions, is to rearrange the map of the world and annex the territory of others. And they all grovel before the State. The State is their God. It possesses every right, that of life and death included. One of my Professors of Law said the other day to one of my fellow-students, whom he took for an Alsatian: 'Why do you write the word State with a small letter? It is evident that you are an Alsatian, and that, like all Frenchmen, you have no conception at all of the State (*Sie haben keinen Begriff vom Staat.*)' The amusing part of the business was that the student to whom this reproof was addressed was a Badener. I can tell you, we are pretty well stifled in that atmosphere of pedants."

Weiss listened to his son with sparkling eyes. Suddenly, raising his glass, he cried:

"Gentlemen, let us drink to Kummel and his coadjutors. . . . May their monomania increase and multiply! It is they who will get Alsace back for us!"

"Meanwhile we must bow our backs and count the blows," said Gangloff.

Weiss was not to be put off.

"Here's Kummel's health!"

And he emptied his glass, smacking his lips.

February. The winds contend with each other at the crossways of the valleys. It snows, it freezes, and it thaws. The peaks are white, the slopes grey, the meadows by the river are green.

The Venetian blinds are down today. They are lowered when the helmeted regiments pass, the tourists with thick calves, the Kreisdirektor going his rounds. Behind these blinds, with their slanting slats — a hundred little passages for the eye — there are looks alternately mocking and merry, or mournful when the parish priest advances under a canopy, bearing the Host, or when some old inhabitant is borne along in his black coffin. Today behind the blinds eager eyes, and even the eyes of the pious, contemplate sin. Old Schmoler and Jacobine shake their heads, blame, condemn, and nevertheless peep out at those who pass and flaunt themselves below.

After all the fog and rain, the Carnival is shaking its bells. There are masks over faces, dresses made for more generous contours float over flat hips, curling wings hang over ill-shaven cheeks. Karcher, a libidinous old sinner, is got up as a pregnant woman, the Badecker boys are Moors, Minna of the mill is a Louis XV. page. They gesticulate and grimace, and gambol, and dance; they go into *cafés* whence the screams of romping girls ring out; they form processions behind the big drum and the flute. One beats a drum and another shakes a rattle. There are confetti and coloured streamers, false noses and false hair, false girls and false boys, false ogling in a

false light. A bear passes, then a great lady — purple stockings, Herculean shoulders, a red parasol, a hat the shape of a glass shade — then a gorilla and his lady wife. Mingling in the crowd with upturned moustaches and watchful eyes are police officers, keeping a look-out for forbidden colours and uniforms; they have arrested a French Cuirassier. What a tumult in the darkness! Straining on the bellrope, the forester keeps on ringing the curfew. Now he is coming out of the schoolhouse; he has a false nose adorned with three warts; stumbling and zigzagging, seeking refuge in the ditches to avoid imaginary vehicles, jovial and garrulous, he makes his way home. Grumbach is at his own house; he has already given his fifty-second kick to the obstinately closed door. . . . And now the moon, invisible for weeks, shows her astonished face between the clouds.

"After all," says Weiss to Reymond, "we must have a little frolic from time to time. Our boys blow whistles for want of something better to do. We live meanly. We languish."

On the mountains the white headgear of winter is disappearing. Now it is merely a crown. But in the hollows of the ravines there are still lines and streaks of snow which trace open jaws, wriggling adders, clutching claws. When one gets up there everything is gurgling and rushing, and one cannot count all the little rivulets which dash themselves madly against the foot of the rock. Nature puts on an heroic and strenuous ugliness. There is a warm breath between two cold blasts. The first

sap stirs in the alders. A tinge of life appears on the rain-washed branches.

Seppi the octogenarian has opened his door. Another spring? He turns his hairy ear to listen. No, he must wait a little longer. He goes to bed again.

The next day, as the dog was whining behind the door, a neighbour entered. Seppi was lying very still on his bed. One arm was under his head, the other was laid quietly on the counterpane. Noiselessly, and without useless violence, Death came down the wide chimney; it made but one bound from the hearth to the brow of Seppi, who heaved a sigh. Two old cousins, heiresses to the little house and garden, installed themselves in the room, where they murmured litanies piously before falling to sleep under the light of the wax taper, which can hardly distinguish between the living and the dead.

As a child, Seppi sat upon the benches of that school facing the church. As a young man, he had many loves. One day he appeared in the square in a fine Grenadier uniform. How he fought for his country! . . . When vanquished, he retired to the mountain in company with the goats, to the mountain with the roseate earth. To this earth from which he sprang the shepherd returns.-

This the bell explains to the echoes which wait for every noise that passes. The rocks have heard it, those rounded summits which Seppi loved. Never was the voice of the bell more caressing. Is it because the sexton is old, and is thinking of Seppi as he pulls the rope?

The knell of the veteran is sad as exile, sweet as a lullaby, grand as a battle. A man is born, a man is dead, the bell speaks; it is always the same bell, always the same sound, and yet it is never the same thing. It does not toll for a renegade as it tolls for Seppi, because an old sexton is at the foot of the tower, because an emotion passes from his heart to his arms, and from his arms climbs up the rope, and runs in vibrations round the brass, so that it is his own heart which the ringer sways in the cage of the bell.

The blinds are drawn down in the houses. Those who have stayed at home — women and children — watch the long procession. What a number of old men! All those who fought. Right at the top of the burial-ground, in a hollow of the rock, the coffin has been lowered. The sun has come out of his cloud-prison in its honour, and careers in bluish rays along the slopes; the mounds seem to be kneeling in the pleasant light. Happy are the dead whom the earth receives with joy!

The interval between winter and the real spring is trying for the ailing. Kraut, too, has had enough of life. It was not a long business. He was put into a double lead coffin, where he seems bored. As he so often said that he wanted to go home, he was taken to the station, drawn by two horses. Must a man die, then, in order to discover where his true country is? Those who watch behind the Venetian blinds feel sorry. A worthy fellow, that Kraut! If they were all like him, things would not be so bad.

So he is borne away in his double envelope of lead. Officials are ranged before the railway carriage. The police officers salute. The magistrate repeats phrases which he reads from a sheet of paper. The little train goes off, and eyes follow it into the distance where the Rhine flows, and beyond, beyond, where green Thuringia stretches away. Each in his own home, it is better thus. Kraut has gone. This evening he will be at home.

During the night a fresh wind has dried up the roads, rolled away the fog, and scattered the clouds. The real sun shows himself at last. . . . Not merely between two showers, as for old Seppi, but a sun which lies upon the Black Forest in the early morning, and from this vantage-ground springs up high into the skies and falls into the night, drunk with fatigue.

The hooter no longer howls dismally. As soon as they have passed the iron gates of the factory, the workmen throw their jackets over their shoulders and tuck up their sleeves in readiness to dig the warm earth. The children, dancing in a ring, sing:

"Storik! Storik! Langabein!
Dra' mi uf'm Buckel heim.
Wohi? Wohi?
In's Elsass ni!"

(Stork! stork! so long of leg!
Carry me home on your back, I beg.
Whither, whither? where would you be?
Ah! 'tis Alsace I would see.)

From the lofty nest of twings sounds the "bla-bla-bla" which is like the noise of spring-time. The male is already on the banks of the Thur, walking slowly and sedately among the new blades of grass. The old men and women are laughing at the windows. Alsace is herself again, Alsace is regaining confidence. . . . What does it mean? The stork on her nest! . . . Joining hands round the fountain, in the new rays of sunshine that bathe the square, the children shout at the top of their voices:

". . . Storik! Storik! Langabein!"

Only the geese seem ill-pleased. Those storks disgust them with their mania for throning it on the top of the gables, and their disdainful fashion of lifting their feet among the buttercups in the meadows. Gathering together below in noisy colloquy, they hurl vulgar abuse at the nest above. . . . "Bla-bla-bla," replies the stork, contemplating the horizon.

The forests are veiled in a mist of green buds. How fair is the old land of Alsace! Weiss has put on his summer mood, the colour of fine weather. He has dimples in the hollows of his cheeks, a gay laugh. He is moved at the sight of sprouting lettuces and flowering strawberries; he lifts up his eyes to the hills.

The lilacs are already crowning the walls with their white or purple trusses. Heavy perfumes hover over the soil. A draught of beer under the arbour of the restaurant is a real satisfaction. So thinks Strocker, the

woodman with the fringe of brown beard, whose wife, a red-haired jade with a squint, is playing him false with the miller of Randach. Yes, it may be so. His friends at the inn have told him the whole story.

Towards ten o'clock in the evening, the screams of a woman and children and the crash of falling furniture are heard; a vegetable-dish, a soup-tureen, a bottle, and a variety of plates, hurtle from window to pavement. It is odd that men who have to avenge their honour always begin by wreaking vengeance on the crockery! The police officers Spörrmann and Taubenspeck hurry up, attracted by the noise. The sight of the green uniforms redoubles Strocker's fury. Alsace has been sleeping all the winter. She is awaking! What screams!

"*Use, Schwobe! Use, Gottverdammi!*" Chairs are shattered, heels grind on the boards. In face of the hereditary foe the whole family offers a united front — even the erring wife, who fights for the defence of the hearth. The children hang on to the police officers' legs in clusters! What a battle!

At last Strocker is marched off, his shirt torn open, his head bare, his hair in wet strands on his forehead, handcuffs on his wrists, between the huge, perspiring Spörrmann and Taubenspeck. For he had, moreover, shouted: "*Viv' la France!*" There is a good score against him. There are sympathetic eyes behind the blinds for him who is being carried off by the men in spiked helmets. The sympathizers do not reason. It is instinct.

Dishevelled and battered, the red-haired wife with the squint is leaning out of the window. She is grateful to her husband for having thrashed her so soundly. She admires him. And when she sees Strocker so grimly fettered she bursts into sobs.

So things go on: as soon as the storks begin to say "bla-bla-bla" on the edge of the nest, people feel themselves more pugnacious; the blood becomes hotter, the brain more active, one is nearer to the past. One remembers that one's uncle fell in 1870, that Cousin Joseph is in the Foreign Legion. Then there are the lilacs, the perfumes, the thirst one has to quench in the arbour. A trifle will cause the varnish to crack, just as we have seen. This Strocker was born since the annexation; he was educated in the German school; he served the Emperor submissively and with discipline. One minute of anger, of mad sincerity, and his lips cried: "*Use, Schwobe!*" Then, as one always follows the other: "*Viv' la France!*" And all this because of an unfaithful wife. It must be admitted that it was rather inconsequent. But in a rage the heart is poured out pell-mell, and emptied of all that is in it.

The *Kilbe*, the Friedensbach festival, will be affected by the four months of imprisonment awarded to Strocker. If there is one festival above all others when the natives like to feel themselves at home it is that. The old houses about the square offer the same setting as ever. The *Kougelhopfs* are baked with the flour of the country, the wines drunk have the flavour of their brand, the dancing-

floor is laid with pinewood from the neighbouring forest. The music is furnished by the firemen, who wear the caps and white gaiters of former days, and have drum-majors and buglers. . . . Trombones snort and petticoats whirl. *Yoo* and *yoo* and *yoo!*

The magistrate passes, arm-in-arm with the fair-haired wife he has brought from Frankfort. What a lesson for Suzanne! Kummel instals his brood on the prancing horses of the merry-go-round. The police officers prowl about, with watchful eyes, and ears alert. And Taubenspeck inspects the flags: red and white, red and white. The devil take this red and white! . . .

Truly, if any official should be hovering round one of the girls of Friedensbach, he will do well in future not to wander alone at night in the sunk roads. This is not even allowed in the case of lads from the neighbouring villages. Did not Bader last year bite off the end of a Ranspach rival's nose? Each man has his rights and his possessions. What sort of thing would one be if one did not defend the bright-eyed girls from strangers? Nestling in the depths of their valleys, these Vosgians have preserved their antique freshness of soul. They are sincere and brutal. They drink their wine; they eat their *Kougelhopf;* the gun thunders; the petticoats whirl, *yoo, yoo!*

Reymond and his pupils stroll to and fro in the square brilliant with lime-light.

"It's late; we must go in. Your parents won't be pleased if we stay out any longer."

"Oh! just a few minutes more, Monsieur," pleads Jean. "You know this is the last time I shall see the *Kilbe*."

A self-respecting *Kilbe* lasts two days. At Friedensbach there is the *Kilbe* and the *Nachkilbe*, during which the firemen march past.

In front of the buglers who are playing a brisk march, the tinsmith Flachsberger, the captain of the confraternity, walks alone, a drawn sword in his hand, his apoplectic face shining under a helmet with a horsehair tail. Medals of various patterns jostle each other on his broad breast. A poodle shaved in the semblance of a lion and two spaniels bark sympathetically about him. The fanfare rings out with an apocalyptic blare; the trombones drive the panting buglers before them with a vigorous movement. The Staff officers follow; the banner, the sappers, ax on shoulder; then the hydrant-bearers, their torsoes entwined with ropes and hose-pipes, arranged in quincunxes either by art or accident; the passive and honorary members bring up the rear. . . . They dine at the inn, *Zum weissen Lamm*. It is a long business. Hours pass. They come out at last. An entirely new world seems to offer itself to the gaze of the firemen; the street-lamps dance a measure in which the houses try to take a part by dilating their façades after the manner of the bellows of a concertina. Although he is buffeted by contrary winds, Flachsberger walks at the head of his troops, draws his sword, and vociferates

a "March!" which makes the window-panes of Friedensbach tremble.

White gaiters, French caps, buglers and drum-major, disappear in a cloud of dust. A shred of glory descends upon the roofs of Friedensbach. Were not those buglers playing an air curiously like the famous

"Il faut monter là-haut, soldat;
Soldat, monte vite à l'assaut."

(Up there must thou go, soldier;
Soldier, advance to the attack.)

The police officers follow at a distance.

Reymond listens to this song of the bugles. Above the roofs, he sees the slopes all golden with blossoming broom. He says to old Schmoler, who is sitting on the bench by the door:

"Your Alsace is a beautiful country."

Schmoler looks up.

"Yes, too beautiful. . . . There is a price to pay for beauty."

X

KRAUT'S successor has just arrived at Friedensbach. Kroner was born in a Würtemberg village. When? It would be hard to say. He is tall and thin. He has interminable arms, and hands like those of a mummy, which flap against his thighs when he walks; a long neck with a restless Adam's apple; a head ugly but interesting, with a scanty beard, melancholy eyes, a high arched forehead. Kroner is of no definite age. He has something of the boy entering upon adolescence and of the old man who is losing his hold on life.

At the office Kraut receives persons who come to pay taxes or receive certificates politely. As soon as the door creaks on its hinges, he emerges from his papers and looks up, not affably, but conscientiously, gravely humane. With the old people he will even occasionally speak French, which he does fluently. Any little service he can render he renders, and when he notes the name of a deceased person, he shakes his head as if to share regret.

This Kroner leads a lonely life. On Sundays he is often to be seen seated under the willows by the river. He also walks about with his hands behind his back, much in sympathy with the terraced gardens and the roofs of the little town, the wings of which brush each other. The moon knows him well, and amuses herself by drawing his comical figure upon the walls.

It is not unlikely that Kroner writes verses in the evening. What is certain is that he spends hours shut up in his room seated at his table, which is pushed close to the window: the pen flies, and the meagre torso rocks as if to mark the rhythm of syllables. Suddenly, Kroner will throw out his arms and begin to declaim. Schiller and Lenau are his men. He quotes them. Their terra-cotta busts are enthroned over the piano. For Kroner has more than one string to his bow. After his bath of poetry he takes a bath of music. Holding his head high in the powerful passages, and bringing his nose down to the keys in the gentle melancholy ones, the man is intoxicated by the sounds that float out on the silence of slumbering Friedensbach. What is he playing? The *Sonata Pathétique*, after which he mops his forehead, his eyes dim, his whole soul outpoured. A mask of Beethoven contemplates Kroner sympathetically. And now his fingers race over the keys again; the notes rush along, pressing one upon the other with the force of a torrent; an invisible choir raises the song of *Freude! Freude!* (joy! joy!). Kroner throws himself into the performance with feet and hands and head and shoulders; the shadow with its abrupt movements crouches in a corner of the room, increases grotesquely, invades the ceiling. *Freude! Freude!* The flood spreads out, and becomes calmer; it is as if the storm were dying away behind the mountains, and after it the swallows were dancing on the azure of a clear sky in the freshened air.

The officials do not like this Kroner with the pale

blue eyes. Everything he suggests irritates them, and everything they say shocks him. Kummel is sarcastically eloquent with regard to him.

"Ah! he is a flower of Würtemberg, a piece of that old German porcelain which was broken while it reflected the moon. He's quite out of date, poor Kroner! His personality is all made up of memories and theories of universal brotherhood. A musician, yes, I am bound to admit; but no representative of our German Fatherland! He ought to be sent back to his Würtemberg village to listen to the swaying of the pine-trees in the evening. He is a man of the stars and not of German earth. Kroner? an evangelical old maid!"

Kroner no longer talked much at the table of the missionaries of the Idea. He ate noiselessly, a sign of degeneracy; he used his tooth-pick discreetly, a sign of neurasthenia; he did not thump the table with his clenched fist to support his arguments, a sign of congenital weakness. One evening, nevertheless, when he had pronounced the word "kindness," a murmur rose around him, a murmur very much like a shout of execration. Thrusting a congested face forward, his neighbour cried: "Kindness, kindness? *Non, Monsieur*" (in French). "Kindness! We are strong enough to dispense with this medicine."

Once or twice Kroner had exchanged a few words with Reymond, when they had been left alone in the dining-room of the restaurant.

One evening the two men met on the river-bank. They

walked along side by side. The softness of the air invited confidences, and Kroner, true "flower of Würtemberg," did not fail to respond.

"I like those two old Schmolers, especially Madame Jacobine, with her cap so neatly tied, her well-washed cheeks, and her kind grandmotherly eyes. She reminds me so much of my mother, who is just as simple, just as pure of conscience. . . . My father is a postillion. He blows his horn in the forests of Würtemberg. I am his true son. . . . Ah! if you could see our house at the corner of the forest near the river (it is because of that that I am so fond of this place where we are). Something lies on the roof, something even better than a stork's nest: it is peace and kindness, the wish to do the will of Heaven. My mother sits at the door, mending, peeling vegetables, saying good-day to the passers-by. . . . All of a sudden the horn sounds, and the father appears on the seat of the carriage. He stops for a moment. He says: 'Good-day, mother.' She replies: 'Good-day, father.' They look at each other. The whip cracks and the bells sound again in the wood. I love my Würtemberg. And I love Alsace too; its frankness, its pride. Poor Alsace! How hard we are to her! . . . Poor Alsace! I am a good patriot, Monsieur Reymond, you may be sure. And therefore I say also in my distress: 'Poor Germany!'"

"Why so?"

Kroner made no reply.

Old Schmoler would often say:

"Monsieur Kroner? . . . He's the sort of German they used to make in the time of my father."

Hammer, the greengrocer, who heard a customer declaiming against the Schwobs the other day, held his tongue prudently. Finally he said:

"As for me, as long as I sell my vegetables, it's all one to me! . . . Let the bigwigs quarrel; it's their business. We shall always be the victims."

Weiss, to whom Reymond repeated these words, replied:

"In Alsace, we men, like others, are men with stomachs and purses. Some are discouraged. We have been waiting so long. But we must react, react. On Sunday, the 14th of July, I will take you to Belfort. There we will forget Hammer and his vegetables."

In the faint light that precedes the dawn, they were standing in a crowded railway-carriage with sleepy eyes and grey complexions. The immensely long train was running through the deserted fields. Occasionally they passed a station, dark groups of waiting people, the confused noise one hears when half awake, lamps still burning in the waiting-rooms; there is a shrill whistle. . . . The train creaks, the joltings become regular; they roll on, on. . . . And suddenly the sun breaks through. The travellers raise their heads, resuscitated, and look out at the gold of the flowers, the silver of the dewdrops, the oblique scarf of sunbeams under the orchards, a spire soaring into the light. Alsace displays herself fully,

that the eyes which behold her may bear away her living image and lay it in the folds of the lost flag.

Weiss looks with respect at all the unknown folks packed into the carriage; and behind this carriage there are dozens of others, equally crowded; after this train there will be other trains; on the roads leading from country towns, villages, hamlets, and isolated farms, there are carts in which people are standing, holding each other round the waist so as not to fall, and where the black bows dance on the fair heads of the women; there are lads bending over the handle-bars of tinkling bicycles; there are whole families on foot, old men, parents, children holding each other by the hand, their round cheeks on a level with the ears of corn; an emigrant tribe, a whole race, obeying some mysterious call. And Weiss says to Reymond:

"We slept through the winter. Look at this awakening."

A wag calls out suddenly: "Long live . . . long live rice soup!" A laugh runs through the carriage. Fired by success, the wag continues to work the vein. "Long live . . . banana! Long live . . . raspberry!" The same huge laugh greets each sally. The company lays aside its reserve. Not entirely, however, for there are in this train persons only too well known to them, who have notebooks and pencils and good memories into the bargain. Visitors know they will be watched, and listened to, and followed step by step till the end of the pilgrimage. Chins are thrust out furtively at the fat

man in the grey suit, and the gentlemen with scars on their faces who speak French, and are officers in mufti from the garrison at Mulhouse. Even the wag refrains from further demonstrations.

Alt-Münsterol! . . . A bearded police officer, flanked by a police inspector, passes from compartment to compartment, scrutinizes, questions, and makes notes. It seems as if the authorities were determined to prove themselves intrusive, harassing, and hostile to liberty to the last moment.

"Where are you going? . . . Why? . . . Have you friends at Belfort?"

"*Fertig!*" (Finished.) The train starts again. The human cattle has been checked.

"It was here," explained Weiss to Reymond, "that a compatriot of yours, a young doctor from Lausanne, who thought he was already on the right side, called out, 'Long live France!' A spy pulled the cord of the alarm-signal, and the train stopped fifty yards from the frontier. . . . Six months' imprisonment! However, he only did three, thanks to the intervention of old Pastor Ort of Mulhouse. . . . Now we are safe!"

They hurried to the doors. France! They were almost surprised to see trees like any other trees, a river with dirty waters, white mile-stones, a dusty road. France! There were no shouts, no songs. But there was a sense of having laid aside the yoke. There was no one to ask: "Where are you going? Why? For how long?" Every one felt relieved, breathed more freely.

There was an inclination to shake hands, to talk in order to hear if the voice had not changed its tone. And, in fact, every one began to talk and to laugh. Strangers who had been staring at each other mutely, like china dogs, winked, became animated, offered each other a cigarette.

The Customs officers of Petit-Croix had been notified that they were not to inspect Alsatian baskets too rigorously, and everybody passed through without interrogation or frowns, the fat man in the grey suit and the scarred officer included. In the waiting-room, where the stream spread out, a lad presented the French flag, a band played the *Marseillaise*. Every hat was removed, even those of the fat man and the scarred officers and the crowd filed past the colours which were dipped to salute Alsace, past the wind instruments which blared forth a call to arms. The visitors felt happy. Hearts were singing. Old people pressed each other's hands.

Here are the first French soldiers: laughing eyes, supple gestures; none of that stiffness, those clicking heels, that haughtiness, that harsh invective . . . these soldiers are men. An Adjutant returns their salute in friendly fashion; they look at each other confidingly. . . . No doubt there are reprehensible things to be seen. Yes, papers are lying about, the windows are dirty, there is grass between the rails, a certain go-as-you-please atmosphere, a democratic unceremoniousness — things the Alsatians are no longer accustomed to see and which the scarred officers note with sniggering compassion. Yes,

and something more — the worship of words, the worship of colours, of heroic display. No end of defects! But, nevertheless, these people are cheerful; they possess gaiety, that treasure of life. They talk to you on the smallest provocation; they have perception, tact, antennæ — in a word, they are human. When one comes from the other side of the barricade, this is what one notices, and not the dirty window-panes. Perhaps, if one were to live among them, one would regret the order, the strict regulations to which one has become accustomed, but today all one sees is the welcoming smile, the Adjutant's wave of the hand, *amenity*, the sweetest flower in the garden of humanity, the charm that conquers and wins hearts.

This Alsatian crowd cannot exactly explain what it feels so well. An old man gets near it, however, when he says:

"As soon as I come into France, I, Seppi Schubetzer, want to begin telling stories."

"Well, Hort," asks Weiss, "do you feel yourself a bit French?"

Hort makes no reply. What should he say? It is less than a year ago that he finished his term of military service; this is the first time he has crossed the frontier and he is bewildered. This Hort is a subordinate in Weiss's office, a surly, obstinate fellow, on a massive scale, who can understand French, but can hardly be said to speak it. In heels and back and shoulders, as in the carriage of the head, he still has the rigidity acquired

in German barracks. Whenever he is addressed, he instinctively readjusts his attitude. Weiss is treating him to this little expedition. There will be one more who will have seen! One more who will be able to compare.

Belfort! And suddenly there is a flutter of flags, an orgy of red, white, and blue, a crowd that flows hither and thither like water: schoolboys, peasants, street Arabs with their peaked caps, laughing women, smart little gentlemen explaining the program of the day, a hundred children of a school kept by nuns, hurrying after the white starched coifs. Everywhere the roll of drums, the eager call of bugles, the blare of trumpets. The whole atmosphere is sonorous. The sky is like a huge cymbal. Here they come! Here they come! . . . How gallant they look! The bayonets stab the light with their mobile points. Couples link arms. All advance, keeping time with the bugles — even Hort, who stares with gaping mouth. What is it which animates all these men? What is it which flushes their faces, lights such a flame in their eyes, and such enthusiasm on their brows? What is the victory of which they feel so sure? . . . Weiss has ceased to exist as Weiss. He carries his stick over his shoulder, like a rifle; his chest expands with martial hopes; and when the buglers cast their golden lightnings skyward with a supple gesture, his cheeks are inflated, he blows with them, he is this whole crowd, he is this infantryman whose eyes sparkle under his *képi*, he is this artilleryman with the heavy jaw, he is this dragoon who is spurring his horse, he is all France,

he soars in space like the banner that floats above the bayonets.

"A decadent nation," said Kummel. "A decadent nation!" repeats Weiss. "Come and see, my good fellow!" Ardour and earnestness pour from the throats of the bugles. They sing the plains of France, her hills, her rivers, her blue which is the joy of the horizon; they send a promise across the Vosges. All these faces underlined by the black chin-strap offer the gift of themselves; for the frontier is near, and every one knows that *they* are on the other side, crouching, ready to spring. . . .

Little blue-and-red-soldiers, do you know what courage your ardour pours into the hearts of the faithful exiles? Can you feel the tenderness of the many eyes that rest on you?

On the Champ-de-Mars the crowd is seething, dotted by the black Alsatian bows. And in the vast open space batteries roll by; one notes the supple lines of the horses, the clink of swords drawn from the scabbard, the formidable squares of the regiments, the thousands of white-gaitered feet which are set down and lifted, the glitter of bayonets, the proudly borne banners, and still the bugles, and the brazen blast that sweeps over the assembled heads. When the squadrons which rush forward in the wild frenzy of the charge disappear, a cloud of dust rises into the air like the smoke of a conflagration.

Hort still says nothing. He looks. He listens to this commanding officer addressing his men as "My friends."

Once more there is the rampart of bayonets, the quick tramp of men returning to barracks. There is a grandmother there in the foremost of the crowd, a rustic grandmother in a gauffered cap. A whole brood of youngsters is sheltering in the wide folds of her skirt. Suddenly one of the smallest of the band slips across between the ranks of the soldiers. Finding himself alone on the further side he howls at the top of his voice, terrified at his own boldness. And it is a comical sight when the grandmother calls her lost chick. A mounted Major has observed the drama. He half turns in his saddle; with his sword, he signs to his men to mark time, and opens a space in the interminable column. Then, smiling under his long moustache and saluting with his sword, he says: "Pass, Madame." The old woman gathers up her skirts, and, driving her brood before her, she rejoins the brat who is still howling open-mouthed.

Hort remembers how once in the streets of Mulhouse a Lieutenant ran his sword through the body of an apprentice in a hurry who had slipped across between two companies. And he utters this cry, a cry of deliverance wrung from him by an act of humane courtesy: "Yes, indeed, now I'm a Frenchman!"

Was it really Hort who said this? . . . He is astonished at it himself.

Weiss slips his hand under the Alsatian's arm. He carries him along. They dine behind the laurestinus-bushes of a terrace. Hort's face has regained its harsh military expression. He is silent, engrossed by the duty

of the moment, which is to eat. In the square below, the merry-go-rounds are revolving to the whine of their barrel-organ. A negro, under his green parasol, contorts himself before his ices and sweetmeats. There are red balloons, blind beggars, shooting-galleries, the crash of broken pipes, the laughter of the full-breasted wench who reloads the carabine and hands it to a rollicking soldier. Heat, dust, sweat, all the joyous vulgarity of the fair which the *Savoureuse* seems to drag along in its dirty waters, spread out in pools among the rubbish and the broken crockery. . . .

All this the visitors are determined to think very fine, very grand. They came to admire, to give colour to the fair legend on which they live.

The train rolls homeward in the sunset glow. Its passengers are dead tired. Their heads are buzzing with a confused noise of rhythmic steps, bugle-calls, red patches, blue patches, the murmur that rises towards the quivering flags. All this they are carrying back with them towards the wall of the approaching Vosges. The gay highways of the morning are covered with shadows. At the last French station all is quiet under the faded garlands.

"Long live France!" cries a Mulhouse workman more than half seas over.

His wife, a little tub-like woman, dressed in purple, glances anxiously at him.

"Come, Joseph! you must hold your tongue now."

She says this in an Alsatian patois the acerbity of

which no translation can convey. Joseph repeats his cry, and lapses into silence. Prudence reasserts itself in all these souls. And now the masters of the day, the police officer, the police inspector, the Customs officials reappear. They make a stir. They turn over the contents of bags and baskets. They take names. They question. They confiscate cockades and ribbons. It is a typical Alsatian 14th of July evening. Dreading some outburst, the fat woman in purple keeps close to her drunken husband, ready to clap her broad hand over his open mouth. But Joseph confines himself to hiccuping laughter. After which he affirms very simply: "*Yoo, yoo, Gottverdammi.*"

Backs are bowed again. All day long they have been living in the open. They have said the things that were in their minds. They have rubbed up against Liberty. They have marched to the rhythm of bugles. And now they have come back to greyness and silence and fear.

The drunkard repeats, shaking his head: "*Yoo, yoo, yoo, Gottverdammi!*"

It is the next evening. The days are long, the evenings warm. Reymond is walking on the bank of the river. Near the bridge in the penumbra, a man bows to him. It is Kroner, alone as usual. Reymond feels sorry for him.

"What a fine evening!"

"Beautiful! And how did you enjoy the fourteenth?"

"The French troops looked magnificent."

Kroner evades this issue.

"There are, it seems, on the other side of the Vosges thousands of men in uniforms of a certain colour, armed with rifles and bayonets, and on this side of the Vosges there are also thousands of men in uniforms of another colour, also armed with rifles and bayonets. . . . Tomorrow, perhaps, or certainly in a year or two, the trumpet will sound for war, and these men will murder each other. There will be masses of dead bodies in this pretty path on which we are walking. Poor valley!"

"Then, you think there will be war?"

"Yes, I think so. I think so because we are strong, too strong. We have too many men, too many guns. It is a terrible thing to be too strong, because strength, pride, and harshness always go together. That is a law of psychology. In barracks, at school, in church, nothing is talked of but force, the power of the fist. Poor discipline! poor pedagogy! poor religion! . . . Believe me, Monsieur, I am a good German patriot; I love my country with all my heart, and it is because I love it that I suffer when I hear this eternal cry of 'Strength, strength, strength!' and never 'Kindness, kindness, kindness!' . . ."

After a silence Kroner went on:

"We are hated, we are hated everywhere, Monsieur, I know; I have felt it during my travels. Jealousy? I don't think so. People do not hate the Germany of Schiller, but this Germany which puts German justice above the justice of God. I think of many things every

day, when I read our newspapers and our reviews, when I listen to the talk of our officials and our officers, and I am afraid, afraid of what *must* come."

Reymond listens without interrupting. He feels the heart of an honest man beating.

"Truly, I believe that we are destined to make others suffer and to suffer ourselves terribly. What a struggle is being prepared! Every day, in my native Würtemberg, my mother prays to God that kindness, pity, and justice may prevail. But how many millions of men are praying to the Devil that cannon may prevail! . . . And I, too, pray for Germany. In the evening, when I play my piano, that too is a prayer, a little star which the clouds devour. Round me the others are always crying: 'We are strong! we ought to dominate the world!' . . . And they strike their breasts, which resound, because there is no heart within them. . . . I tried to show the Alsatians that I love them, and I think they are fond of me. So, of course, Monsieur Kummel has written to Strasburg, Monsieur Döring, too, has written, and I am dismissed. I am going back to Würtemberg, with my piano. Good-bye, Monsieur Reymond."

Before Reymond could detain him, Kroner, like some huge bat with his thin bowed back and long arms, mystical, romantic, a lunatic, some would say, a clear-sighted prophet according to others, had disappeared into the darkness.

And the next day Kummel remarked:

"Kroner? He is a pious Socialist, one of the worst specimens of humanity. He is being sent back to Moravia. We want men in Alsace, not star-gazers. That's what you call them, isn't it?"

XI

MADAME BOHLER accompanied her son to Besançon when he went up for his degree of Bachelor of Arts. Jean started pale, feverish, his nose in his books. And he was plucked in his written examination. One of the professors explained the reason of this set-back to Madame Bohler.

"Your son must not be discouraged, Madame. The young Alsatians are often victims of their extreme conscientiousness. They never cease correcting, erasing, beginning over again, hesitating between two meanings. The result is that the Latin translation, the Greek translation, the French composition, were good, even very good, but almost half of the work was still to be done. We feel that your son is really ready. All he lacks is a certain facility, a certain vivacity of execution. I consider his success assured in the autumn."

"Poor Jean is really much to be pitied," wrote Reymond to his family shortly afterwards. "His failure has depressed him terribly, and wounded him in his pride as an Alsatian. Going to extremes, he declares himself incapable, a perfect donkey, or the victim of circumstances which cause the Alsatian to be a kind of hybrid everywhere. He says cruel things. 'When I saw my comrades at Bensançon so keen and intelligent — and I

hear they are twice as brilliant in Paris, so what a figure I should cut there! — I felt so out of it, so horribly alien. It's enough to make one cry with rage. It's a wretched thing to be an Alsatian!' It is very difficult to cheer him up. Work is almost impossible in these days of torrid heat. So Monsieur Bohler has decided on two things: René, who is troublesome at home, where he can talk of nothing but expanders and of jumping with the feet together, is to be sent to an aunt at Rouen for the holidays. To give Jean a rest, and a change of ideas before returning to work he has already gone over hundreds of times, we are to make a fortnight's tour in Alsace, to see museums, relics, cathedrals, old inns, castles, ruins, and abbeys. It will be splendid. Monsieur Weiss and his two sons, Charles, of whom I have often spoken to you, and the eldest, François, who goes into German barracks this autumn, are also to be of the party. I am looking forward to it immensely. And it will enable me to become more intimate with Jean, who is certainly a noble fellow, frank, loyal, and sensitive."

The travellers have returned.

The memories, which were somewhat confused at first, are co-ordinating themselves. Ruins everywhere. What ruins! Perched on the summit, leaning over the precipice, a tower with shattered walls; on this neighbouring peak, which has at its feet the plain, and villages nestling among the vines, is another tower, showing savage breaches; down there is yet another. Doors open over

a chasm. They saw the hearth where quarters of oxen were roasted, the watch-tower of the keep; they shivered at the chill of dungeons. Elsewhere there are stony fragments, crumbled heaps of masonry, a spiral staircase which winds upward under the open sky, clinging shrubs, brambles and mosses, all the sinister intimacy of Nature with the remnants of a perished humanity. Where are they who carved those blocks, polished those balustrades, poured the boiling pitch through the gaping machicolations? How haughty are those forsaken ramparts which defied the centuries, which witnessed the drunken orgies of the marauding barons, heard the laughter of loose women, and one day the shout of boors advancing to the assault of the stronghold! Down there in the grass — one treads upon it in passing — there is a stone with a coat of arms and a half-effaced date.

You who pass this way in tourist costume would like, perhaps, to know the history of this eagle's nest perched in the azure and the wind. What does it matter to you? Live your lives in the plain. And if you want marble plaques with graven explanations, pointing forefingers, names, a cicerone, a printed notice, climb up to the Hohkönigsburg.

Seated on a boulder where a lizard is darting about, the traveller gazes at the blue slopes of the hills descending like flocks to the plain, the sparkling ponds, the canals, the rivers, the carpet of cultivated land, the uncut jewel of harvests set in light, the brown scales which are the roofs of the little town, that smoke which proclaims

a city, that other smoke, in patches, which rises from a wood, runs through the fields, and means a train like a child's toy, in which men, seated on cushions, show a little piece of cardboard to a man in a cap, and then read the telegrams in the paper with serious eyes.

The travellers go down towards this plain. Barefooted children with roguish looks, their baskets slung round their necks, are gathering raspberries. They cry "Greeting! Greeting!" to the strangers who pass. Then they say something in *patois*, and laugh merrily. It does one good to hear this laughter. It rings out like silver bells in the sunshine. It does not rise from the heart of a disingenuous race. Standing on ladders, the daughters of Alsace gather plums, displaying their solid calves. They are quite aware of this, and not at all ashamed. Their bare arms plunge into the cool green of the branches. There are footsteps. They look. These travellers are the right sort. Three plums fall on the grey hat. "Thank you! Thank you!"

And every village in the heart of its orchard, in the heart of its vineyard, has its patent of nobility to show: its castle, its roofs with three rows of dormer windows, its flight of steps at the entrance, its carved doors, and, looking out upon its manure-heaps, its mullioned windows, its windows with small panes set in lead. The visitors question the man with the pitchfork. The date of this house with the gargoyles? He answers, "Oh! it's very old," as he goes off.

In the evening the travellers rest at a rustic inn, where

the table is enlivened with pink slices of ham, and bowls in which the newly gathered apples glow. Succulent smells issue from the kitchen. There is not much talk. Enframed in the window are the shoulders of the ancient abbey. The whole country is a page from the book of history. If one listens, there is a murmur like that one hears in a sea-shell, the memory of tempests. Emperors, Kings, Popes, men of war, what great names! How many tombstones there are on which a Bishop lies at full length, showing the passers-by his bald forehead and a nose eaten away by time. Their virtues are set forth in Latin. The word "honour" recurs everywhere. "What is death," says one inscription, "if one carries honour to the grave?"

The travellers cross the square as night begins to fall. For a while they follow the road that runs along the river. Unforgettable evening, when the little town, flooded by moonlight, looks as if it were sketched on the margin of some heroic legend. . . . A man is leading back the last cart heaped with sheaves from the field. And the ears are so golden pale that it might be the moon herself he is carrying off to the barn. The white-waistcoated lawyer is on his doorstep, and so, too, is the grocer in embroidered slippers. And the watchman passes, striking his cane upon the pavement, which means that the children who are dancing in a ring round the plane-trees must be called in. So they are called. As long as one can remember, things have gone on like this. Beloved tradition!

The travellers sit down on the hillside. One of them says:

"What a fate to be this lawyer, this grocer, to live in a scutcheoned house, under a roof where the same weathercock has creaked since the days of fable! To live in close intimacy with these turrets, these arched windows, these doors where one still sees the furrows made by the chains of the drawbridge; then to die, to go and join one's brethren round the cross which has been stretching out its arms over the graves since 1422."

They are silent. They look at the valley as it falls asleep.

Drei Schlösser auf einem Berge,
Drei Kirchen auf einem Kirchhofe,
Drei Städt' in einem Thal,
Drei Ofen in einem Saal
Ist das ganz Elsass überall,

says the proverb. "Three castles on one mountain, three churches in one churchyard, three towns in one valley, three stoves in one room — that is Alsace everywhere."

The moonlight makes Weiss sentimental.

"I remember a story my father used to tell me long ago. I have never forgotten it. Here it is: Once upon a time there were a giant, a fairy, and a little girl. The little girl was very much like the fairy, and a little bit like the giant. To please them, she used to call them Papa and Mama. It would not have been possible to have had parents more dissimilar. The giant was so

jealous and so brutal, he shouted such a string of abuse to the fairy across the mountains, that the little girl used to hide in the forest. The giant was continually summoning his counsellors. He would say to them: 'Tell me, for my memory is failing a little . . . wine and tobacco, you know . . . to whom does this little girl belong? She has not my eyes, nor my stomach. Shall I give her up? But she is pretty; she pleases me.' The counsellors answered: 'Sire, shut her up in a court, have her educated on your own principles, fatten her up that she may grow like you. There is nothing like force. Give your orders. We will obey.'

"The giant gave his orders. The little girl was shut up; men in spectacles taught her the principles of the giant (the first of which is that might is divine), and fattened her up.

"But at night, when the spectacled men were asleep, the fairy came secretly to the court, and opened its walls with a touch of her wand. She said: 'Now, my child, live as you choose, play, dance, skip. Learn to embroider and to play the harp. Work, too, but without wrinkling your forehead as the spectacled men teach you to do, for there is no good work without cheerfulness. I don't like the severe manner in which you are treated. God is not hard. He loves laughing folks.'

"The child was gradually humanized; she learned to laugh, to embroider, to play the harp. . . . Then the fairy called her confidante, and said to her: 'Do you think she is becoming civilized? I love this child. She

learns very quickly. And she has beautiful eyes. I believe her to be well gifted; she has feeling, intelligence. Perhaps she is a trifle heavy. . . . Do I deceive myself? Honestly, whom do you think this child takes after? Really, if she has nothing of mine, neither tastes nor aspirations, I will leave her in the hands of the giant. I will not do violence to her nature at any price.'

"The confidante considered: 'Madame, I think she has taken the good qualities of both sides, for the giant is not altogether evil. It is from him that the child inherits her taste for music and a certain gravity. But from you she has taken something more than her eyes; she has your entire soul, your hatred of injustice, your love of liberty. Appeal to her heart and she will remain faithful to you, even if the giant were to shut her up in the court for over a hundred years with the men in spectacles.'

"And my father used to add in conclusion: 'That is the story of Alsace.'"

They slept between the rough sheets of the inn, and then they took the pilgrim's staff once more. Strasburg. They strolled round the cathedral, whose shadow makes another monument in the narrow square, where cabs roll along, and street-boys chase each other. They saw Cain and Abel, Abraham's Sacrifice, Jacob's Ladder, Jonah emerging from the whale's belly, Judas, the Wise and the Foolish Virgins, the Virtues and the Vices, the Magi before the Infant Jesus, Clovis, Dagobert, Charlemagne,

Louis the Debonair, Charles the Bald, and Lothair, and Conrad and Henry of Germany, and the Last Judgment. Silence. A forest of columns. The glory of the painted windows, from which the many-coloured rays fell in a gorgeous rain. The Four Ages pass before Death, who strikes the hours. Tombs. *Si roges quis sim; pulvis et umbra.* The old roofs of the city clustering round the sanctuary look like so many sturdy pointed caps. . . . Further on, the palace of the conqueror, a place of glittering gold and curving domes. Helmeted men stand on guard before the sentry-boxes. They are relieved. Guttural cries, the stamping of boots. Two nations, two spirits. The street-boys imitate these soldiers and laugh. . . .

The travellers turn back quickly to the older quarters — to the slumbering waters. In spite of all these guns, these helmets — the old pleasures, the old liberties, the old traditions, twine their garlands about the balconies. The figures carved by the chisel of ancestors smile at the scornful glance of the officer's eyeglass. . . . Can a treaty loaded with seals and signatures change hearts? . . . The benches, the beds, the cradles, the tables carved as they have always been carved, speak as they have always spoken. How dull the palaces with golden domes are in the midst of the deserted gardens where the symmetrical jets of water are playing!

In his own room in the evening, lulled by the sounds that rise from Friedensbach — it is nine o'clock, the bell

rings, the boats dance in the twilight — Reymond contemplates the vision of the Alsace he has just discovered. What images! what colours! what picturesqueness! From the plain to the summits of the Vosges, how many monuments there are which tell of the strong yet gentle soul of the old country! From century to century its traditions have been written on the walls of its country towns, on the painted windows of its churches, on the gables of the houses. The country lies between river and mountain, so simple of line, so clearly traced. The wind sweeps it with wide wings, bending the tops of the poplars, teasing the weathercocks, swooping into squares, gliding into courtyards. And the men have the frankness, the roughness, the harsh flavour, of this wind.

And it is this proud country, whence rose the cry of Rouget de l'Isle; these towns, so often ravaged and destroyed, so often rebuilt, always ready to suffer for their liberties, that the heavy parvenus of glory think to seduce by the display of their might! . . . One has only to look about one to know whence one comes, who one is. The stick may fall, the voice may scold, eyes may dart lightnings, boots may hammer the pavement, but one knows what gives value to life. This people has seen at close quarters the hordes of Ariovistus, the Huns, the Alemanni, the *Écorcheurs*, the Swedish troops, the Kaiserlicks, and many more, and with them the smoke of conflagrations, desolation, death. . . . Yet when did they despair? They have not changed. They are the stronger for their many memories, more attached than

ever to their rights and dignity. Rapp, Kléber, Kellermann, Lefèvre, are their witnesses. Everywhere there are too many stones to allow them to forget, too many ruins on the hills, too many dead on the battlefields!

They drink their wine and sing:

> On changerait plutôt le cœur de place
> Que de changer la vieille Alsace!
>
> (Would they change our Alsatian race?
> Sooner shall they our hearts displace!)

In spite of the heat, Jean works from morning till night.

"Imagine that you are appearing before the jury," said Reymond one day; "construct an audience, and take the plunge boldly! Classify your ideas; express them simply. I am listening. Romanticism . . ."

Jean meditates. He knows his subject, but how shall he attack it?

"Monsieur, I can manage the writing, but speaking . . ."

"What are you afraid of?"

"How could I have learnt to speak? Father hardly ever talks."

"Well, I won't insist on it today. This evening before you go to sleep, think of your subject, arrange it."

Jean asks his friend Charles Weiss:

"Do you think the Alsatians are less intelligent than the French?"

"Certainly not. We are splendid stuff. It's the Ger-

man schools that turn us into machines. You left at the right moment. You should see the higher classes. There is never a spark of originality. They prepare a canvas for us. We may not go outside it. The forty pupils have to repeat the same things, if possible in the same words. In history, if you venture to argue or to raise an objection, you are treated as a babbler, a *Franzosenkopf*. . . . Roughly speaking, we are soldiers even in the schools. The professor is the colonel. He speaks. We click our heels together. *Zam Befehl!*"

"It will stick to us all our lives," sighed Jean.

"Some people say it gives method and discipline," continued Charles. "*I* say that it paralyses one. One accepts everything. One becomes a machine."

Shut up in the schoolroom, Jean spent the whole evening debating with himself, gesticulating, making objections, which he answered to the best of his ability, furious with his own timidity and awkwardness. Still agitated by these efforts, he looked out at the valley, and understood its abandonment better than ever.

"One can't be wholly anything here. It would disgust us to be German; they won't let us be French. Alsatians? . . . Then they hunt us down."

The next day, Jean, embittered and discouraged, defined Romanticism without ardour and with no attempt at precision.

"That's better," said his tutor, "but you still seem to be suffering. It is evident that you are distrustful of yourself and of your tongue. Try to have some confi-

dence in yourself. Tomorrow we will take *Le Cid*. *The Cid! Sapristi!* That's a work which demands fire, colour, concentration, vigour! "

In the evenings of these hot days, the three went for a walk, always the same, at the foot of the hills, for that was more restful. On some of these occasions they saw Kummel's bowler hat bobbing above the bushes. In the miraculous serenity of the evening, the schoolmaster's hat — with the schoolmaster beneath it, no doubt, though he was not seen — was a spectacle worthy of admiration. But this was not Jean's opinion.

" Pray, Monsieur, let us be off."

" Don't be so nervous."

" He is madder than ever, you know. In all the last lessons he has given us, he has done nothing but abuse France. 'All your French culture is superficial. . . . The Alsatians are bastards, who must be humiliated.' "

" What nonsense! . . . As a fact, it is very comical and quite unimportant! "

Ceremonious bows are exchanged.

" Delightful weather, is it not? " said Kummel, mopping his face. " May I continue my walk in this agreeable company? "

He described his holiday program.

" There must be method in all things. Fancy destroys both nations and individuals. I get up at seven, and say: Now I will perform my daily ablutions, and then my methodical respirations. . . . Then I breakfast. . . . At nine o'clock I say: Now a short walk, a little ob-

servation of plants and of the manners of insects. . . . After that, grammar and syntax, history and geography, not with a view to tuition, but with a view to personal perfection. Dinner. A pipe. Now, I say, I will meditate; I allow myself a nap. . . . When I have had my nap, I work in the garden, give a lesson in vegetable culture to the children, have some familiar conversation with them. When the temperature cools, we have some vigorous exercise. A meal. A walk. I count my steps on a given distance. I compare the number with the number taken on previous occasions. In this way, the mind is always alertly fixed on an object, and thus one may advance courageously to the battle of life. . . . Nine o'clock. Then I say: I and my wife will now go to bed, and enjoy slumber."

This breviary of activity is set forth with a tone of magnificent conviction. The word "now" in particular is pronounced with a sort of nasal finality.

"Does not all this tire you very much?" asked Reymond sympathetically.

"Fatigue is the mother of energy, and energy is the father of life."

"Then what becomes of the poetry of the holidays?"

"Poetry! Poetry! There is no poetry save in strict method. We understand this in Germany."

There was a silence. Then Kummel said suddenly:

"And so you are leaving our valley, Monsieur Jean Bohler? . . . for good, I hear. . . . You are going to rejoin the Great Nation?"

Jean trembled. He was white with anger.

"Just so. I am going to rejoin the Great Nation. Perhaps you will not always sneer when you call her this."

"I never sneer, Monsieur Bohler. I am only grieved when a young man does not know the true path. . . . The German eagle is full of vigour. It must expand — that is inevitable. The nations which have become effeminate must give way. This, again, is inevitable. To obey a sentiment, to go towards declivity (do you say decline or declivity?), to go towards decline, is a fruitless operation."

Jean's eyes sparkled. He threw prudence to the winds.

"Monsieur Kummel, when you find yourself before the bayonet of one of our Chasseurs Alpins, on which side will decline be?"

The schoolmaster turned pale. This hypothesis was disturbing. He recovered his calm presently.

"Utopia! The old conception of the struggle between nations! With our modern engines of destruction, battles will be fought at a distance of fifteen kilometres. Bayonets may be left at home with the umbrellas!"

Kummel laughed loudly. He bowed and went off.

"Good heavens!" said Reymond. "It was time to part. He did not like that idea of the bayonet. A little shiver ran down his spine."

"You won't tell father, will you, Monsieur? It would do no good."

"No, no, my dear fellow!"

Besançon. This time the candidate proved freer and more versatile. He passed with honours.

What a good little dinner they had after sending off the telegram to Friedensbach! Everything was good, everything was beautiful. They walked on the banks of the Doubs; they wandered about in the old quarters, admiring the sober elegance of the low houses, the shady courtyards, the barred windows, the door with a knocker, the quiet harmony of the whole. They went into a shop that displayed fruit gathered that very morning, ripe grapes. A cat was asleep on the counter, a canary sang near the ceiling. The grandame who seryed them was amiable. She had pretty manners, pretty phrases. . . . Then there was the long journey back to Friedensbach.

"Here's our Bachelor of Arts!"

They embrace. René, who had returned in the morning, presses his brother's hand. Men don't kiss each other! There are flowers everywhere.

"Turn round!" says René. "Let's see how a Bachelor of Arts is made."

"And we congratulate *you*, Monsieur Reymond. We owe a good part of this success to you."

Reymond protests.

"Father is quite right," says Jean. "But for you I should have been plucked again."

Every one is pleased. Before night falls, they walk round the garden. The evening train passes with

a whistle. The goats come down from the heights.

Madame Bohler takes her son's arm.

"It is good to be together again a little longer."

"A week more, mother."

Monsieur Bohler is walking slowly. They look at each other. They repeat: "A week more."

René is gesticulating under a fir-tree with his expanders.

"What? Are you at it again already?"

"Certainly. I want to gain two centimetres in the thorax before we leave. A quarter of a centimetre a day."

"There's one who knows how to take life," said Monsieur Bohler.

Madame Bohler pressed her elder son's arm closer.

"Well, mother?" says Jean simply.

"My dear, good boy!" replies his mother.

They add nothing more. So much can be said when the mouth is silent, leaving the heart to speak.

Weiss never entered the burial-ground of Friedensbach without feeling a bitter contempt for human barriers, an emotion of pity, a softening of his angry feelings. These dead who were at strife as long as they lived, who excommunicated each other, all silent now, all resting tranquilly side by side. The plant rooted in one mound throws its branches over the neighbouring mound; the flower that blossoms on the body of an Alsatian has the same perfume as the flower that opens over the body of a German.

Weiss came to the grave of his son Jacques. Now it was François' turn to put on the hated uniform. At the age when a young man emerges into freedom, pride, and dignity, at the age when the heart feels the slightest pin-prick so acutely, to have to bow his neck to the yoke, to stifle the cry that rends the throat, to accept, at least apparently, the atrocious lie, because his country has been stolen from him!

Has one any right to exact such a sacrifice from a son? Is it worth while to struggle so? And why, since these dead are sleeping so peacefully under the same earth? What madness drives men to crucify each other before entering into the eternal silence? . . . Weiss felt all the ties that bound him to his people relaxing. He closed his eyes. On just such an October day as this he had gone with Jacques to Mulhouse; they were about to be parted for many long months. "Do you feel strong enough to bear it all?" Jacques had answered very simply: "Do you doubt me?"

Later at Munich, standing by the body of his son, so thin, with such drawn features, Weiss thought he should go mad. A doctor explained: "We did our best for him. When he reported sick it was already too late. A slow wasting. . . . A pleurisy. . . ." In his letters Jacques had said nothing of the refinements of humiliation inflicted on him by a gambling Lieutenant, furious at feeling himself condemned by this silent youth.

The face of the dead is an eternal marble. Their

words have the force of words of command: "Do you doubt me?"

Weiss turned his head. Clouds were drifting across the sky. Here and there a blue rift, the slanting ladder of a sunbeam stretching down to an invisible point of the valley.

Footsteps. François approached his father timidly.

"I knew where I should find you, father."

They were silent, standing side by side. François coughed to clear his voice.

"What are you thinking of, father? No, don't say. I know quite well. . . . I have considered. . . . Alsatians must stay in Alsace. To stay one must deserve to stay — that is to say, one must suffer. Don't be afraid. They will not corrupt me. They will not humiliate me. The more they treat me as a Wackes, the prouder I shall be. So many others have held out! And there will be six of us to struggle; for you, mother, Suzanne, Charles, and Jacques especially, will all be with me."

They went home arm-in-arm. And Weiss said:

"We are trying to do what is right. May God help us! I want you to take away something grand with you, a memory which will keep you erect. On Sunday we will go with Bohler and his sons to Wissembourg, where the monument to those who fell in 1870 is to be inaugurated. And now let us be cheerful, in spite of everything. Men were born for battle, but mothers have

hearts of honey. We must cheer yours up. For the last few days the tears have been coming into her eyes very readily. So this evening we must sing the thirty-two verses of the Bismarck song with grandfather."

On eventful days, the grandfather joined the family party. He did not need to speak. He was there, with his shining forehead, smooth as a pebble in the brook. That was enough. Before he is laid to rest, he ties the threads that the conqueror will seek in vain to break, with a look, a gesture of his trembling hand.

The grandfather was in the garden with Suzanne, who ran to meet the newcomers.

"Look, father, what grandfather has brought you! A tricoloured cockade!"

"I took it from the souvenir cupboard. It belonged to my uncle who fought at Wagram. Victor, you must take it and lay it upon the tomb of our dead at Wissembourg. My uncle, I, you, your son — four generations."

There was a moment of emotion. But the grandfather added:

"And when is Suzanne going to offer us the fifth?"

"Grandfather, at your age one ought to be serious."

"I am, my dear. A dozen children would not be too many to carry on our good race of Weisses."

Once upon a time there was a little town set between the North, where it is always raining, and the fair land of sunshine. Its roofs gleamed red amidst the gold of harvest. All around it were pleasant hills.

But the men of the North, yawning beneath their fogs, were waiting for the spring to march towards joy, pikemen in front, chariots behind. When assailed, the little town defended herself as best she could. . . . Ramparts were thrown up, thick ramparts flanked by square towers. The peasants, reassured, returned to their fields. The seed was sown.

"They will not come back," said the hermit. They came back in greater numbers, with more deadly weapons, and shattered a high wall. There were many dead. Reinforcements. The town was victorious. The breach in the wall was filled up.

Twenty wax tapers were burnt. "They will not come back," said the old priest. The grapes were gathered. The wine-shops winked invitingly under the pointed roofs. The wine was good. Youths and maidens danced under the trellis. And next year, it is said, many children were born.

Round the little town, living its life and living it well, great empires arose, expanded, and picked quarrels with one another. What are old ramparts that have been patched a hundred times, and are cracked all over for the delight of the maidenhair fern, against a covetous horde? A thrust, a rush. The walls fell, the defenders died bravely under the shafts of the whirlwind swarms. In the paved streets the charge swept on with a thunder of horses' hoofs. There were fires and rapine, the shrieks of women, the yells of drunkards in the darkness. . . . A supreme effort. The town was free at last, but in-

fested with blackened corpses, and hearts were full of phantoms.

"They will not come back; we have killed too many," said the Burgomaster with the harsh beard.

During these repeated ordeals, the little town had acquired a cheerful serenity. Familiarity with suffering had taught it to fear nothing; the old people knew the rattle of pikes against a closed door so well that they ceased to tremble. And when the tocsin of war sounded, the citizens embraced their wives laughingly.

This little town was called Wissembourg.

Once again, Abel Douay had five thousand men to defend it. The pink roofs and their dormer windows looked down on women leaning out of casements, the confidence of all France shining in their eyes. The Turcos were watching. The hour struck from the steeples which stretched their necks upwards among the trees. And the cock, his beak pointing heavenward like the steeples, vigilant as they, enlivened the night with his vibrant trumpet-call. On the morning of August the 4th the chief addressed his men: "There is warm work before us. I know you. You keep the gates of France. . ." There was not time to say more. An army of dark men emerged from the woods. On all the roads, across all the fields these ants swarmed. They were felt to be under every tree, behind every bush. There was an atrocious battle. A fountain in an invaded park sobbed despairingly. It is terrible to see twenty men slaughtered by three hundred. Livid brows leaned against

doors. Soldiers bit each other as they rolled on the ground. Hairy hands were pressed upon throats. Forward! France! *Deutschland!* . . . On the Geisberg behind a wall were Zouaves with their triumphant red breeches, on which great stains of blood are hardly seen, the black demons with such white teeth and eyeballs and cries so hoarse that they strike terror to the heart of the enemy. . . . The cannon finishes them. . . . The birds begin to sing again. August the 4th! It is evening, and so fine!

At nightfall Prince Henry of Prussia desired to see Abel Douay, that great dead man, stretched on the bed of an obscure room. He looked long at the dead. What were his thoughts? He saluted and withdrew. Glory is sometimes heavy to bear. In the gardens were flowers and perfumes; in the sky were stars. Lying round the garden fences, on the steps, in the streets, on the roadsides, on the banks of the river, which reflects the stars, what masses of dead! The thirsty earth drank in the fresh blood. And the dying wounded said to this earth: "Our hearts are giving thee our blood, drop by drop; corn of tomorrow, we shall be in thee; the bread made of thy flour will have a taste of memory."

Always the waves of Time cover up what is, and it becomes that which was. But the might of memory lurks in the depths of this Time and shakes its torch. No blast can extinguish it. August 4th, 1870 — October 17th, 1909.

Gentlemen in tall hats and frock-coats, cockades, braided uniforms, breasts on which so many decorations gleam that one wonders if there is still room left for the heart, police officers who look round and take notes, flags and garlands. The little town blooms into colour and surveys the scene. Above are the stands where workmen are still busy with their hammers, and the monument, mysterious under its grey covers. . . . In the gardens, the pale heads of chrysanthemums, in the meadows the innumerable mauve cups of colchicums; on the flank of the hills, oxen drawing the plough. Sweetness in the air, sweetness on the horizon, the melancholy of things about to die. The sun sets in a sea of blood. "Mama," says a little girl to her mother, "you always say that the dead are in heaven. So they will not be there tomorrow?"

"Yes, yes. They come back on one day in every year to see that they are not forgotten."

More gentlemen in tall hats and frock-coats, spiked helmets, armlets, and cockades. . . . Will those the dead are waiting for not come?

They come. These old men who walk slowly, dragging their legs a little — one has lost an arm, another an eye — are the survivors of the fierce struggle. To prove that they are not phantoms they have been the first to come and raise a trumphal arch. They feel a bit dizzy on the top of a ladder, and their hammers do not always hit the nail on the head. The town hears with emotion of the project of those who defended it so well, one of whom,

a cripple, who has been brought to the spot in a wheelbarrow, is seated on the strange vehicle, and thence directs the work, winks, advises, and encourages. The garden-gates open. Women bring armfuls of chrysanthemums, immortals, and the blood-red foliage of Virginian creeper. Madame Abette, the mistress of the grocer's shop at the corner, supplies the balls of string. She explains:

"I saw them myself, defiling before my shop on the morning of August the 3rd. How well they marched! The next day one of them came to die on the bench under my window."

"Then, you will remember me," said the old man in the wheelbarrow. "In those days I was on horseback."

"And I hadn't a round back in those days."

They come. Before they started, the old women went round the gardens, gathering the autumn flowers, those queens of a day, so fair that they should only be offered to the dead. They have bound them into bouquets, these smiles of the soil. . . . Now there is a circle of faithful faces round the tombs, so bare before. The cockade of the uncle who fought at Wagram is hidden under roses. The berries and foliage of Alsace lie warm upon the stone, bearing with them something of her sunshine and perfume.

She comes, the Alsace of instincts and of toil, the brooding Alsace of week-days and of the years of silence. . . . She comes by all the roads that wind round the foot of the mountains. There are moving dots on their

grey network. The big farm-horses with their jangling bells draw the grandfather, the little ones, the woman, the man. Coming from villages lost in the blue distance, their breasts contract with an emotion they cannot explain (for one cannot explain the thing that comes from the depths) when they see the black crowd swelling, and the veiled monument looming larger before them. They come, the parish priests in their cassocks, the factory foremen, the workmen pedalling along, grey with dust. She comes, the woman with toil-worn hands, her children hanging to her skirts, and follows her husband, the man with the pipe. They come, the tanned vine-dressers; yesterday the grapes were in the vats; they were tasting the sweet must and kissing laughing girls; today they answer to the call, the old who saw and who keep their eyelids half closed over their dream, and the young who have served the conqueror.

How many are there? . . . Fifty thousand? A hundred thousand? Living souls bending over the dry bones.

Already, the brasses of the German bands, gilded and resplendent, are playing grave airs, the fifes rend the air. But it is for the dead the crowd has come, those dead who sleep on the hill surrounded by many other hills scattered as far as the eye can reach under the sober light of an October Sunday.

The crowd waits, bristling with the standards of banners, spreading out into space. Behind it are forty years of silence. Before it is this unique day. A man appears

at the back, resting his two hands on the edge of the tribune. What is he saying? . . . Under its wrappings the monument looks like an enormous coffin about to be lowered into the grave. . . . "He's too far off!" say the voices. "We can't hear." Suddenly dominating the crowd, another man built like a woodman, with epic shoulders, appears; his face is like a roughly cast medal; there is a certain austerity in his emotion. The colossus measures the extent of these heads; he drinks in all their uneasy thoughts with a deep breath; now he is looking further and higher, at the hills, the horizon, the soft blue of the distance. Then, feeling that the country is with him and near him, his voice rings out like a clarion. The eleven hundred veterans who wear the medals of Mexico, Italy, the Crimea, trembled, and Alexandre Baudot, who sounded the charge at Malakoff, straightens the back bowed by his eighty-three years.

"Noble sons of Alsace! I salute those who persisted in a hopeless resistance. I salute them in the name of their comrades, in the name of the French officers, in the name of the Republic. Suffering unites men more closely than glory, for we love in proportion to the suffering we have endured in common. . . . Soldiers who died for France, immortality is yours, and memory is ours. I press the kiss of France upon the stone of your tombs!"

At this moment the speaker, his right arm raised to heaven, his breast swelling, his forehead bathed in light, accumulates in himself all the anguish, all the hopes of

the crowd, suddenly united by an invisible bond. . . . "Look!" said Weiss to those near him. They turned round. At the sight of these thousands and thousands of men whose serried ranks cover the hill, of all the upturned eyes flashing strange fire, they trembled.

"Alsatians, when you stop before this monument, bare your heads, bow low, listen to the passing of the souls of your ancestors."

There was an ardent bugle-call, and then the solemn sounds of a chorale: *Behold! how sweetly do they sleep.* The drapery that was drawn aside reveals the bare stone, the genius of the Fatherland ready to take flight, the cock uttering his morning greeting to the sun. The heart of the crowd ceases to beat. Foreheads are pale, people grasp a neighbour's arm, look at each other. Is it possible? Is it credible? These red, white, and blue flags, these flags of the veterans who have come from France, which flutter and float, this blare of trumpets rising, muttering, rolling down the hills to the little town seated behind the yellowing orchards. The *Marseillaise* . . . The Prussian officers are standing, motionless as statues, leaning on the hilts of their swords, with impassible faces and strongly marked jaws. . . . *Allons enfants de la patrie!* . . . Hearts contract with a spasm of surprise. Heads are bared. The will had nothing to do with this movement of the hands. It was commanded by the heart, which begins to beat again impetuously. Men look at each other again. Is it true? For forty years they have held their peace. For forty years

prudence and fear have been their companions, trampling down sentiment and chilling generous impulses. For forty years the phantom of defeat has followed them as faithfully as their shadows! . . . And suddenly this flag, this hymn of a resuscitated people!

There are, no doubt, in the crowd some who have come from idle curiosity, some sceptics, some indifferent souls, perhaps even some who have rallied to the master who pays well. At this moment these have no time to weigh the pros and the cons, to let the head master the heart. It is too beautiful! Too great! Too real! All they thought was dead warms their blood till it boils. . . . Prodigious introspective moment, when the soul of a people, surprised in its instinctive truth, is laid bare! . . .

Tears roll from the eyes of veterans into their white moustaches; they beat time; Baudot, who sounded the charge at Malakoff, is the first to accompany the fanfare with his broken voice, then another takes it up, and another. . . . Oh! it is something not to be forgotten, not to have suffered in vain! . . . After the long nightmare to find a house where one is happy. There is the short, hurried breathing of exiles who press against the warm heart of their recovered country, the formidable respiration of a crowd dominated by a common thought. And suddenly this cry, which drowns the voice of the trumpets:

"*Aux armes, citoyens, formez vos bataillons!*"

Who would have expected such a cry? It gushes out as springs gush after an earthquake, in a wild, splendid

rush. It is the seething, frenzied aspiration of all souls towards liberty.

Magnificent old men, already bending down towards the earth that calls you; young men with quivering nostrils, if your eyes are full of tears, it is because the dead of Wissembourg live again in you!

They possess you, these uneasy dead, whom only Justice will appease!

Talking low, warmed by the fire of sympathy kindled on the hill, Alsace takes her departure. Peasants, vine-dressers, workmen, and middle-class citizens, they are now but minute specks on the roads that lead to the habitations of men. From them all the others will hear the story: the old woman who gathered flowers in the morning, the old man who cannot leave his arm-chair, the children sitting round the table in the lamplight. They will tell it to the best of their ability. Their eyes will tell the rest, the things for which there are no words. Once again, swift and mysterious, passing over hedges and fences, walls and gratings, the word of command will run through the country: "Stand fast!" All know what this will cost, what persecutions are in store. They read on the faces of the officers leaning on their swords, when the *Marseillaise* rang out, a cold determination to crush this people, guilty of the crime of fidelity. (It would mean Saverne, war.) But they know, too, that the crime brings about its own punishment, that contempt of human dignity entails defeat, and brutal pride ends in abasement.

They have only to wait. Well, they will wait. . . .

"Don't let us talk; it was too splendid," said Jean Bohler.

"Father, after that we may well suffer a little," said François Weiss.

The parents made no answer. Reymond, too, was silent, overwhelmed by the hour he had just lived through.

They had sat down away from the crowd. From minute to minute Weiss would repeat: "I am drunk — drunk with pride, pride in my Alsace. That hour was really worth forty years of suffering. Yes, I am proud of my Alsace! . . . Boys, be thankful that you can begin life with this memory in your hearts."

"Do you remember our return home after the war, Weiss?" said Monsieur Bohler. "We had fought as well as we could, we poor Mobiles of the Upper Rhine: badly armed, badly shod, shoved this way one day, and that another. And then suddenly to have to look this thing in the face: Alsace German! Alsace, the most French of all the provinces of France! What a return! To hear those butts of rifles falling on the pavements of our little towns, where joy had reigned. To hear the laughter of the intruders, their heavy, sinister laughter! It was enough to drive one mad! And every day, every hour for months and years, to witness their robberies from the past, their suborning of hearts. . . . We could close our shutters, lock and bolt ourselves in. But their songs of triumph rose to us from the streets.

"And then those two processions in opposite directions! From the depths of Lorraine to the extreme point of Alsace, those who were on their way to rejoin France: carts carrying the bed, the walnut-wood cupboard, the table on which one's elbows have rested as long as one can remember . . .; two hundred thousand human beings leaving everything that had been their life behind them! And that other procession from the other side: on the bridges of the Rhine the army of immigrants, all the starvelings of Germany, a whole horde dressed in green, with a feather in their hats and spectacles on their noses, ten brats clinging to the skirts of their mother, who was expecting her eleventh. . . . And very soon all the brood installed in gardens still gay with the flowers planted by those we had known. . . . How did we live through those times? Ten years, twenty years, thirty years, nearly forty years! Forty years! And you have just heard the answer of Alsace! Ah! my boys, my boys! "

No one had ever seen Monsieur Bohler in such a state before.

" Bohler, my friend," said Weiss, " give me your hand. Let us all shake hands, fathers and sons! "

They pressed each other's hands, François, Charles, Jean, René, the two fathers, and all had tears in their eyes.

" You will see, father," repeated the boys in a sort of exaltation.

Night came down upon the plain. . . . On the top of

the hill, the genius of the Fatherland, the cock, the sandstone pyramid hewn from the Vosges, visible things; on the hillside, the dead, those invisible witnesses, those great living forces which hold the men who are making their way along the roads of Alsace more closely captive than ever.

It is the hour of good-byes and departures.

Madame Weiss and Suzanne have packed the box, folded the linen, slipped the surprise that is to remind the absent one of home under the waistcoat. Now they are grouped in the dining-room, which is sunnier than the drawing-room, and little Marie is astride on her grandfather's knee. The portrait of the dead boy looks down upon them all from the wall. It was in this room that they had gathered to bid him farewell. Hearts are deeply moved.

There was a ring at the door. It was Reymond.

"When do you start, François?"

"Tomorrow morning. I shall be at Breslau tomorrow night. And you?"

"Tomorrow evening."

"But you will come back to see us," said Madame Weiss. "You must often think of your friends in Alsace when you are in your beautiful canton of Vaud. They will need sympathy, unless . . ."

"Unless . . ." repeated the grandfather.

"Unless . . ." echoed Weiss.

They passed round the brown-paper album which Charles had given to his brother. Silvery petals starred the pages, all the flora of the valley.

"The scent of the country," says the grandfather.

Reymond got up.

"I thank you for all the kindness and affection you have shown me throughout these two years, which have passed so quickly. . . . I carry away memories I shall never evoke without pride and sadness also, for I know now on what a family in Alsace lives, and how much resignation and courage they need to carry on. . . . I will not say 'Courage!' to him who is leaving you, for he has so much. May God bring him back to you!"

They were all assembled on the doorstep. Suzanne was smiling rather sadly. Why was this Reymond not an Alsatian? Little Marie waved her handkerchief, Weiss his hand, and Charles called out:

"You must write to me, Monsieur."

Reymond looks back. Dear people, good friends!

And now the tutor is taking a last walk round the park with his pupils. With two bounds, René is at the foot of a pine-tree, climbs to the top, and slips from branch to branch.

"This will be useful to me when I am a Chasseur Alpin."

"What! Yesterday you wanted to go into the air-service!"

"No; I will be an Alpin. It's a fine calling."

They left the Alpin to his own devices.

"And you have quite made up your mind, Jean? Literature is what attracts you?"

"I am so fond of history."

"Of course we shall find each other again in life. From this time forth you are my friend Jean."

They look at each other, and this look is a compact.

"If you only knew, Monsieur, how strange it seems to me to go! I can't realize it. To think that we shall never live in Alsace again; that all this is over . . ."

His voice trembles. Reymond speaks of other things.

"Who is going to Paris with you?"

"Father. Mother is too tired. She will come later, when we are settled at Professor Paget's."

Julie was at her kitchen-window.

"And you are going to stay, Julie. You are lucky."

"What can we do, Monsieur Jean?" says the old Champenoise; "some go and some stay. Such is life!"

"I leave mother in your charge. You must write to me every week to tell me how she is, and if she looks sad. And this evening you are to give her this letter."

"Never fear; I will take good care of her. I have been doing nothing else for twenty-nine years."

Rapid footsteps crunch the gravel.

"It's father," said Jean. "I think he is looking for you. I still have half an hour. I will go to mother."

The two men strolled along the paths.

"You are more fortunate than my sons, Monsieur Reymond. You will come back to us. We shall always receive you as a friend. And we shall no doubt go and

spend a little of the holiday-time in your country. I am anxious that you should keep in touch with my boys. They are very fond of you. You will remind them of the pleasant years in Alsace."

They went back to the house. Although no one had spoken of departure, the dog understood. Seated under the table he moaned dismally, and came occasionally to sniff at the legs of his young masters.

In the hall the luggage was piled up for the coachman to take. Madame Bohler busied herself with prosaic details, wrapped in a silence which betrayed a maternal tenderness ready to melt into tears.

"The carriage is at the door."

"My beloved boys!" said Madame Bohler, biting her lips.

Her two sons were in her arms. They clasped each other close.

Reymond disappeared discreetly. He said to Jean:

"I will wait for you near the road-keeper's cottage."

One page is turned, the page of youth, of long evenings in the sheltered nest, of the melody of piano and violoncello, of intimate talk. If they sob, in spite of their resolution, it is because they know well what they are leaving behind them. The page is written. It is turned.

In the house the travellers have just left, there are the empty hall, the palms, the stag's horns, the coat of mail, the glass which reflects all these familiar things. Old Julie knocks at the door of the little drawing-room. It is some time before there is any answer.

"Does Madame want anything?"

"No, thank you, Julie."

"There is a letter for Madame from Monsieur Jean."

Reymond waits near the level crossing. Here is the little panting train, and for a moment he sees the profiles of the two boys, René already consoled, already looking forward to the new life, and Jean pale, with knitted brows. A last signal. Once again, once more, the little train bears off some of the sorrow of Alsace.

The hour of departure and farewells has come for Reymond. He lingers in the Schmolers' garden. Above the russet foliage he sees the roofs of Friedensbach, the dormer windows, the weathercocks and the gables playing hide-and-seek, roofs set on the houses like caps. . . . On one of them is the stork's nest. And down below is the river, whose waters look like dancing beams in the sunlight; a streamlet winds its silver thread under the privet-bushes covered with fruit; kneeling on a plank, an apron folded under their knees, women wring out the hempen sheets, laughing and dipping their red arms into the rippling water. Up higher are the flaming woods and the bushes with their purple berries. Once more he hears the clatter of the workmen's sabots on the pavement. Once more the geese pass along in single file, limping and gabbling. Once more it is noon, and the officials pronounce their *Mahlzeit!* They dine. And then Reymond shakes hands and says farewell.

Old Jacobine is on the threshold, so neat in her white cap.

"We shall miss you very much. If you want to see us again in this world, you must come back soon. My husband will be at the station. He will bring you a few apples and pears to eat on the journey. Here, Jacob, say good-bye to Monsieur Reymond."

The shoemaker is hammering at his soles. The little life goes on. The fountain murmurs *Ein . . . zwei . . . drei.* In the square in front of the school the boys, marching stiffly in pairs, stamp on the ground as they will do later in their regiments. Kummel is in command. He comes forward.

"Good-bye, Monsieur Reymond. A pleasant journey. And mind you tell them in French Switzerland, where they are rather inclined to make fun of everything, what order reigns in Alsace, what discipline, what prosperity! Good-bye. We shall certainly meet again. One never can tell what may happen. Yes, we shall meet again! Good-bye."

Old Schmoler hands over his parcel.

"They are ripe, they smell good. Good-bye, Monsieur Reymond. Come back to us."

The police officer has approached, for it is always well to know what people are saying. And it is a kind of allegory of Alsace on this station platform: the bent old man with his kindly face and stiff back, and this upturned moustache.

Once more Friedensbach at the foot of its hills, Fried-

ensbach with its smoking roofs, the familiar paths, the scattered goats on the slopes — but no Seppi! — the Weisses' house, the Bohlers' house.

Good-bye, little valley!

XII

THEY met again in the plain, in Valais: the pupils now young men, tall and broad, with brown or fair moustaches; Monsieur and Madame Bohler; Monsieur and Madame Weiss; Suzanne. The meeting was all the more enjoyable in that it could hardly have been hoped for. Jean and Charles, both in barracks; one in France, the other in Germany, had had some difficulty in making their respective ten days' leave coincide. And René, a dashing Second Lieutenant, just through his training! What a red-letter day it was! And how joyously Reymond's proposal of an excursion to the mountains to see the sunrise was received!

The boys waved their hats, wild with delight. The parents and Suzanne, seated on the hotel terrace, smiled indulgently at this display of high spirits.

They went up in the twilight, in the darkness, by a rocky path. . . . Valleys, rugged peaks, trees bending over the abyss, were soon blotted out. They recognized each other by their voices. Sometimes the flash of an electric torch showed them a swift vision of a great tree-trunk, like a crouching monster, or of a lichen hanging to a gnarled branch like a beard on the chin of a gnome.

These former playfellows and fellow-students came together again more readily after their long separation in this clamber among shadows than they had done the

evening before, seated on wicker chairs in the hotel verandah. Yesterday even the two brothers had felt almost like strangers to each other. Now the one no longer thinks that he is taller than the other and has more moustache; they find their natural souls again, not those improvised by the fever of cities, the mechanism of the barracks, but the good simple souls that ripened on the slopes of a green valley in the Vosges. Dominated by the unknown things around them, by the jagged peaks they know to be above them, though they cannot see them, they no longer swagger; under this starry sky, a true garden of mystery, they are artless as they used to be. . . . A question. . . . Another. . . . They cap each other's stories.

"Where are you teaching now, Monsieur?"

"At Montreux."

"And are your pupils nice?"

"Very nice."

A silence.

"Charles, what is your brother François doing?"

"He is finishing his legal studies at Strasburg. They are expecting him shortly at Friedensbach. He is to remain there several months to prepare his thesis."

"What is the subject?"

"Oh! some very technical affair! . . . I have forgotten."

"And Emile Zumbach?"

"He is at the school of chemistry at Mulhouse. He begins his military service this autumn."

"Where?"

"Oh! with the Schwobs. . . . He's a true Alsatian, that fellow. He doesn't say much, but he's the right sort. A regiment of Zumbachs would give a good account of themselves . . ."

"Against us, perhaps?" interrupted René.

"Don't worry about him. . . . If ever it comes to that he will manage to be on the right side, like a good many others I know."

"And André Berger?"

René answers this time:

"He makes me sick. He has become such a lump of affectation. When he speaks you would think his mouth was full of powdered sugar. . . . And then, he always knows everything. . . . He, too, is in barracks, at Augers, I believe. Normally, he is working at literature. It seems that he is already writing for the reviews. . . . He disgusts me."

"And you, Jean: you are not talking."

"I am listening to you. . . . And then, it's all I can do to find my way. You must have pity on those who wear glasses."

"Service for three years, isn't it?"

"Yes. I have two years more now."

"He's just been made a sergeant," said René, rather patronizingly.

"Yes, Lieutenant."

They laughed.

"And what about your historical studies?"

"Ah! I mustn't think of them now."

There was a sound of footsteps on the stones.

"It's a queer business!" exclaimed Charles suddenly. "Odd that a fellow called Princip should have murdered an Arch-Duke. Who knows, perhaps all the nations of Europe will be slaughtering each other presently because of this Princip . . ."

"Bah!" rejoined Reymond; "they'll calm down. They will squeeze the Serbians. They'll exact compensation. They're too prosperous to want to put a match to the powder. It would be absurd."

"Don't be too sure of that," answered Charles. "The water in the Pan-German boiler is bubbling. . . . It is boiling over. . . . There is enough steam to blow everything sky-high. All the talk is of armaments, equipment, victualling, fleet, dry powder, sharp swords, colonies, big guns, machine-guns, and submarines. They dream only of Zeppelins. They are building super-Zeppelins. The more these collapse, the more they build. They wear Zeppelin caps, they eat Zeppelin sausages, they smoke Zeppelin cigars, they write with Zeppelin pens. . . . Krupp, Flottenverein, and Zeppelin — Zeppelin, Krupp, and Flottenverein. It must mean one or the other of two things: either they have gone out of their minds or they are preparing a colossal war. . . . What is it?"

"Just listen to that stone rolling."

It falls with a muffled sound, crumbles and bounds against the rocks, whistles and sinks into the abyss.

"Aha! That comes of talking of war!"

"It frightened me . . . those leaps . . . those silences . . . that explosion . . . and that 'plop' into the void with the vague echo that came up to us. . . . Walk in the middle of the path."

"I liked it. . . . It was like a shell. Capital! I feel like a little boy again this evening. It's splendid for us four to be together again. No cares . . . the stars . . . on we go in the darkness! . . . And Monsieur Reymond's voice from time to time, just as when we were at Friedensbach. It's fine! . . . Again! . . . What's that? . . . Who whistled?

"A marmot, no doubt, watching at the entrance of the burrow where her young are nestling. She is saying in her language: 'Halt, who goes there! Advance and give the countersign!'"

"Poor little devil of a marmot! It's a queer world, I must say. That marmot who has hurried into her hole to tell a story of robbers to the captain of her band, who has wakened with a start. And in our world, those diplomatists who are playing heads and tails with the lives of several millions of human beings."

"If there should be war, imagine the entry into Friedensbach! Bugles, flags, *Sambre-et-Meuse*. . . . Father and Mother throwing flowers . . . Kummel crouching in a cage. War is splendid fun! . . . We would greet the dead of Wissembourg as we pass. . . . After Alsace is retaken, peace shall be declared, and the first one who objects, off with his head!"

A falling star, then another, detach themselves from the

garden of the planets, slip along the sky, shoot out their trail, and die.

"The thing that disturbs me," said Reymond, "is this phrase in the newspapers: 'There is still a glimmer of hope.' That is what we say of the dying."

The laugh of a night-bird is heard in the silence.

"Horrid creature!"

"Do you still keep up your gymnastics, René?"

"Yes, indeed! . . . I can carry twenty-one kilos with my arm extended. But what I like best is the attack: to run up and thrust a bayonet into the belly of a dummy. Chook!"

"Be quiet; you're disgusting!"

"It's our business. We shan't get Alsace back by gathering plums. Of course it's disgusting, but as long as there are people who steal countries, we shall have to do 'chook!' Unless we prefer to bow our necks to the yoke. There's no getting out of this. And so, Charles, you are going back there? . . . If the crash comes, won't it be easy to make tracks."

"When I asked for leave, the first I have had since I went to the barracks, I said to myself: 'If they refuse it will be because there's something brewing, and I shall slip away quietly (I am only fifteen kilometres from the Russian frontier). . . . If they grant it, I shall know that I have time to finish my year of voluntary service without any accidents. . . .' They gave ten days' leave to ever so many people."

"You said just now that you believed there would

be war, that they want it. You contradict yourself."

"Not at all. A great many people think that it will be declared next spring. A campaign is never begun in the middle of the summer. . . . Krupp has not yet delivered the very big guns. . . . Father has had some private information. . . . I tell you, it will be next spring. I shall have time to get away. Don't be afraid. I shall be there for the great encounter."

"Capital! I will take you in my section. If you march well, I will make you a corporal the second week, when we enter Germany. . . . Do they treat you badly in your regiment? "

"Not so very badly. My Lieutenant behaves very decently. On the other hand, the non-commissioned officers are brutes. On the whole, one can get along by dint of clenching one's fist in one's pocket a hundred times a day."

"You are lucky . . . there are some Alsatians who lose their heads."

"If you would hold your tongues for a moment . . . one could listen."

"Listen to what? "

"The night."

"Ah! that's Jean all over. His heart craves for sentiment . . . stars, moon, dark caves . . ."

"You little donkey! "

"Lucky for you I'm not in uniform: court-martial."

They come to the deserted châlet, the key of which

had been given to Reymond. They enter, and sup by a fire rapidly kindled on the stone hearth.

"And now try to go to sleep. It is eleven o'clock. We must be up at three if we want to surprise the sun at his rising. Soldiers ought to be able to obey. Unroll the rugs, lie down on the hay, and shut your eyes!"

There was a smothered laugh.

"Oh! . . . Monsieur, he's pinching me!"

"Really, you are greater babies than you were at Friedensbach!"

Silence. Before lying down himself, Reymond sat on the bench outside the châlet for a moment. How the stars twinkled!

"Who's there?"

"It's I."

"My friend Jean! I am glad to have you alone for a few minutes."

Around them was a bluish glimmer, a sprinkling of stars — below as well as above, because of the little lake — the breath of space.

"We might be going to behold the spectacle of creation. I think we could gather stars if we stretched out our hands! What a change from our barrack dormitory!"

"What are your companions like?"

"That depends on the moment. . . . Abject . . . magnificent."

They talk eagerly. They evoke memories. What is

happening at Friedensbach? . . . The little familiar life goes on there as usual. Day after day, in the calm of winter, in the gladness of spring, in the heat of summer, in the melancholy of autumn, each one weaves the web of his fate. Jacobine is dead and old Schmoler is failing. Kummel seems to have lost balance entirely. He raves. His pupils live in perpetual terror of him.

"Do you think there will be war, Jean?" asks Reymond abruptly.

Jean meditates.

"Who shall say? . . . Certainly, *we* are doing nothing to provoke it. If it breaks out, it will be because it was forced upon us. In that case, our duty will be clear. There can be but two solutions: slavery or victory. War is mad, ignoble; but it becomes sublime when it is a question of breaking one's chains. . . . Suppose this night were the vigil before battle? In any case, I am ready; I may say so without boasting. The thought of fighting in order to put an end to war and to deliver Alsace would enable one to pass through a furnace. . . . Unless my will should fail me. . . . One never knows. . . ."

"It will not fail you, my friend Jean."

Reymond laid his hand on his young friend's shoulder. They sat facing the solitude of the night, listening to the lament of cascades hanging on the sides of the rocks.

"What is finer, Monsieur, than to live for a great idea? . . . And when the hour comes, what is finer than to die for it?"

"Nevertheless, war means killing, killing men."

"To me, war means rather the offering of oneself to death."

"In that case, you force others to kill you."

"Monsieur, don't say that, please. Don't upset my convictions. . . . There is Alsace. If they attack us and we are beaten, all France, all Europe, would be an Alsace. . . . Switzerland, too. If I fight, it will be for you . . . for . . ."

"My friend Jean, say no more. I know you. I know you are incapable of any baseness. . . . If you go, you will be a brave soldier of the Right. It is not our fault if there are men who force a painful duty on us. . . . It is still a duty."

"It is still a duty," repeated Jean.

An icy air rose from the hollow of the valley. They shivered.

"Let us go in."

What are the diplomatists doing at this moment? What are the spies doing? What voices are counselling? What hands are signing? Where are the men who, bending over maps, are dividing and partitioning?

Three o'clock. Reymond rises. He listens to the regular breathing of his companions. How well they are sleeping! The herdsmen are already stirring in the neighbouring châlet, built so close against the rock to escape the wind that it is hardly distinguishable therefrom. He sees the light of a swinging lantern; voices speak to the lowing cattle; there is one voice shriller than

the rest, that of the herd-boy, the *bovairon*, which is like the little bell on a calf. Whistling a cheerful air, Reymond approaches this châlet. Outside the cowshed is a black-bearded giant whose eyes are very gentle, clear as space, a sailor's eyes. They are plainly to be seen, for he raises his lantern at the sound of footsteps.

"Good-morning. Shall we be troubling you . . ."

"It depends. . . . Where have you come from at this hour? "

"We are at the Boitsy châlet; we slept there last night."

"Ah! . . . yes, we saw the light. I even went and peeped in at the window. . . . One never can tell. . . . But one soon knows when it's all right."

"That's well! Now, have you new milk for four? "

"At your service."

"And a piece of cheese? "

"At your service."

Reymond walks carefully, carrying his jug of milk in both hands. How cold it is on these peaks! The air whips one's face. One breathes ice.

It is a difficult business to wake people who are sleeping on hay in the middle of the night. If you shake them, they roll over. If you call them, they groan. If you pull them by the feet, they kick. If you tickle them, they laugh and go to sleep again. Reymond has an idea. He will play them the *réveillé* of the mountains as a change from that of the barracks. He intones the *Ranz des Vaches* in a loud voice. Old, plaintive, and artless

song of the shepherds, with something eternal as the mountains in it. The sleepers open their eyes, stretch and yawn.

"What? What? Ah! yes!"

"I dreamt of my Colonel."

"I dreamt I was dancing with shooting stars."

"I dreamt I was flying round the sun in an aeroplane."

"Come, boys, get up, get up! Here are milk and bread and cheese. Set to work."

"Monsieur, when did you get all this ready?"

"That's my secret. Fall to!"

They eat and drink.

"It's not milk, it's cream."

"How good this bread is! . . . And this cheese! . . ."

"After this, those who love me will follow me to the spring, three minutes from here."

"Splendid! Ice-cold water. . . . We'll bathe to our waists. It is so refreshing."

The *bovairon*, a boy of fourteen, has had the same idea; in the grey light of early morning he shows his square torso, his muscular arms, his broad hands, whereas the gentlemen from the town reveal fine skins and slender torsoes.

"Come along! The pool is big enough for us all. Soap yourselves well."

The little herd is lathering his head and hands methodically. They imitate him. The water is not clouded. It is so clear. There is so much of it. It bubbles and ripples, reflecting the vigorous young figures, the laugh-

ing mouths, and the little herd whom it knows well. An eddy: Jean's refined face; an eddy: Charles's resolute face; an eddy: René's grimace; an eddy: Professor Reymond. And the water runs on, carrying away these images.

Charles and René eye each other.

"Show me your biceps."

"Let us wrestle."

Their youth makes them radiant and provocative. They touch each other, grasp each other, waltz on the short grass, roll on the ground, growling and slapping.

The cow-shed opens. The cows and calves come out, slowly and doubtfully, blowing through their nostrils. The bearded giant stands on the threshold of the low door, his cap on the back of his head.

"Are you satisfied with your *bovairon?*" asked Reymond.

"Oh, he is my own boy! It's his first season in the mountains. Yes, he's shaping well, only that he's afraid of the bull ever since he was tossed over a wall."

"I don't wonder. . . . Do you belong to these parts?

"Yes, to the village just below us."

"And what do you think of the assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne?"

"The assassination of the heir to the Austrian throne?" replied the man calmly. "What! have they killed another of them? No; we don't know anything about it. We live with the cows. No doubt they will be able to find another heir. It's a good job."

"There is even some talk of war."

"Of war?" The man shrugged his shoulders. "Bah!"

"And why not?" asked Jean.

"The Germans are all eager for it," said René.

"And where do you gentlemen come from?"

"From Alsace."

"From Alsace? . . . They say the Germans grip them pretty close down there. . . . War, war! It may be so, after all. I judge all these things after the animals. When they have enough to eat in their mangers, they don't attack the others. But when one of them is hungry! . . . Still, the Germans have enough to eat. So they have killed a Prince? . . . A relation of William's? . . . A rich man then? Yes, it may turn out badly. As far as general tranquillity is concerned, it's better to kill a poor man than a rich one. The poor man is forgotten. The rich man has to be avenged. . . . War! . . . However, it will take some time to climb up here."

Turning his back, the herd went to his boiler.

A green sky. . . . Below, night is still struggling with dawn. A mortal cold lays hold of one. Everything is livid, everything is wet. Set in a gash in a gloomy gorge, there is a piece of plain barred with a yellow streak, the Rhone. The grasses are quivering. A shudder of suspense. The peaks loom corpse-like and sinister in their winding sheets of snow. The highest is suddenly crowned by a diamond that increases in size; presently it becomes a tiara of light. Dawn. A red streak on the

horizon. The sinister peaks take on the colour of blood, the livid ones warm themselves and laugh gaily. Some jagged crests which remain in the shade sulk, in ugly greyness, with battlements that look like open claws. Night takes refuge in the hollows of the precipices, slips along the flanks of the rocks, glides into the crevices of the gorges, where it crouches like an evil beast. And up above there is a jubilation of resuscitated colours, peaks seated in a circle to adore the sun, fleeting rays, arrows which pierce the slopes, fly from a stone spire to a tower of snow, and fall into the void, where the death-agony of night comes to an end. . . . The grasses raise themselves, and become inviting; innumerable eyes open among them: the hot eyes of arnica, the blue eyes of gentian, drops from the sky, flowers whose name one does not know, but which have the perfume of Paradise. Hunted and pursued, the shadows seek shelter under an overhanging wall, where the water which is oozing out forms little lakes, black as the devil.

Everywhere now through space the rays of light are thrown in ladders. Why cannot one glide from peak to peak on these slender threads? Intoxicated by the joy of the morning, by the rejuvenescence of the mountain, the boys run hither and thither, giving free rein to their wonder; they dabble in the spring that gushes out between two stones. Created by the sun, this spring sets to work at its task, which is to caress white and blue pebbles. They bend down, they gather colours and perfumes; they pursue insects which come out, they know not whence,

and dance like mad creatures, scattering the tense notes of their wings on every side. The travellers enter into the rhythm of things. They are no longer men, the inhabitants of a house, the citizens of a country; they are a nameless parcel of life mirroring itself in the joy of existence; they are eternal and benevolent like the sky, like the sunbeams, like the laughter of the stream; they stretch out their hands and touch the goodness of God.

"I should like to live a thousand years," says a voice.

Says another: "Suppose we never go down again to the plain?"

Detached from an abrupt declivity, an avalanche suddenly rolls its dusty waves past them. It grinds the firs which bar its passage, carries trunks and boulders along pell-mell, kneads them in its mass, bounds, leaps to the bottom of the abyss, whence there rises a formidable roar, the echo of which, reverberating for a long time, dominates all sounds, and prolongs itself in the lament of the torrent.

Gay quips are bandied on the sanded tennis-courts. Peace has endured so long! . . . People yawn, and backbite, and speculate. There are more foolish virgins than wise ones. Gathered round the hotel tables, what swarms of people from every part of the world — people with white skins, yellow skins, grey skins, all Europe, all America! The dust of motor-cars rises in clouds on the roads. The smoke of factories lies over the towns. . . . People work and amuse themselves. They make a great

deal of money. In the midst of lassitude and luxury, the beast sometimes shows his claws. He draws them in again. . . . Timid people say behind their closed shutters that the world is living too fast, that it makes one giddy to see it. Here and there, under attic roofs, philosophers write terrible things, at which others laugh. Is not the word *modern* a remedy for all evils? Can there be anything wrong with what is *modern?* So we say: modern style, modern women, modern religion, modern ideas, modern smartness, modern comfort.

Masses of doctors are attending masses of neurasthenics. Clinics and nursing homes flourish. Hair-dressers buy castles. Washerwomen to whom Countesses say "Pardon me, Madame," reply: "What do you want?" And advertisements show red devils brandishing bottles on a black background.

Meanwhile the spiders are spinning their webs on the European ceiling. The excited flies dance wildly. These spiders are bloated. Their affairs are prospering. They have devoured a good number of giddy insects; they would like to devour more. New threads are woven round the dance of the flies, round that gay dance in the sunshine.

War!

War let loose upon countries but yesterday buzzing with song and music. Drums, tocsins, bugles. Men are hastening. Women are weeping. A deadly suspense hangs on the horizon. . . . And guns are rolling, rifles

clatter, bayonets gleam, trains bear their load of young flesh to the frontiers. And the women linger long on the platforms of the stations, holding children in their arms.

They have gone. Flags float over the deserted gardens. The clouds have black wings. The nights are silent. But no, it is not possible; they will not kill each other! They want to try their strength, to frighten their opponents. Words, phrases, nothing irrevocable. There are the Socialists, the Pacifists, those who pray to God, and God Himself.

An August morning: blood everywhere. Millions of men are advancing to avenge the dead. The Prussian eagle has planted his claws in the heart of Belgium. Conflagrations, the shrieks of those who are being shot. And the crows are flying in flocks from the woods where they nest. Of what are the dead of Wissembourg thinking?

When, in common with many thousands of his countrymen, Reymond keeps guard over his little country, whose hillsides are white with the ripening corn, he asks himself anxiously what is happening to his friends in Alsace. Once more blood is being poured out like water on this soil of suffering. During the long night-watches, only a few paces from the frontiers of Alsace, the sentry seems to hear again the quiet breathing of the young men sleeping in the hay on the mountain. Where are they at this moment? Are they lying wounded, crying out their agony to the stars? Is the drama of war complicated for

some of them by a terrible drama of conscience? . . . The lament which Suzanne Weiss used to sing sometimes to her piano assails Reymond's memory:

"Tree, what seest thou from the peaks of the Vosges? . . . I see horsemen on the blue plain. The sun rises all stained with blood; it sinks all stained with blood.

"Tree, what seest thou from the peaks of the Vosges? . . . I see the dark armies coming to battle under a heavy cloud. They come from the east and from the west. . . .

"Tree, what seest thou from the peaks of the Vosges? The enemy is dragging my children along with him. . . . Hamlets, spires, and harvests are no more, and my last son is dying against my trunk."

XIII

From René Bohler to Reymond

X——

August 25.

OH! that advance! The dream come true at last! I had explained the meaning of Alsace to my men. I felt them thrilling in response. One of them said: "We've got to deliver the Lieutenant's home from the Boches; it's simple enough. On we go!" On they went, and how gallantly! Under the fiery sky, marching in the open country through the corn where the grasshoppers were chirping, war seemed a magnificent adventure. Flowers everywhere! Our flag blossoming in every field!

We went along singing, white with dust, our tunics unbuttoned, our caps on the backs of our heads. And when I looked round I saw the eyes of my men, brilliant eyes, shining with joy. . . . War! We did not want it, we did not seek it. Not content with stealing Alsace-Lorraine from us, they have been harassing us for forty-four years! A dozen times we gave in, we abased ourselves to keep the peace. Half of the Congo has just been given up to them. What then? Now they want Belgium, Luxemburg, Nancy, and Paris. Good! We have clear consciences. The man who is warned is worth a dozen taken by surprise: we must beat them or be

crushed ourselves. 'Tis well. *They* wanted war. We are going gladly to meet them.

A halt. The soup is cooked. The smoke of bivouac fires rises behind the hedges. Stretched out on the grass, the soldier forgets hunger, thirst, and aching feet. War! There is a glitter of helmets. Our dragoon-patrols. Not an enemy in sight! Where are they, then? This cloudless sky, these ears of waving corn irritate us. It is all too calm. Then our hearts beat with a sudden anxiety. No doubt they are waiting for us on the edge of that wood we see at the foot of the hill yonder . . . in Alsace. . . . The men light cigarette after cigarette. They joke. They tickle each other with blades of grass. One of them has fallen asleep, his head on his pack, his mouth open, his eyes glassy. A voice cries: "I say, Lardemont is dead! . . ."

They laugh. They soon wake Lardemont by throwing clods of earth at him. They don't like to see him sleeping like that.

"All who have photographs of their young 'uns had better have a look at them now!" says a wag. "We can't be sure that the hinges of our eyes will be in working order tomorrow."

They look at each other. The wag chants in a *café concert* voice: "Mélanie . . . when I see thee, bending over the periwinkle flower. . . ."

Up! We are off! The packs are a bit heavy. And always in front of us we see those helmets passing along the houses, disappearing, gleaming like stars on the hil-

lock where we watch them. We are going to make war gallantly. We show ourselves.

The frontier is only five hundred metres ahead. I see the boundary-stone, the post. That village, the smoke which rises in spirals above the roofs as if nothing were happening, are in Alsace. The dragoons are there already. The lucky dogs! One of them — I see him through my field-glasses — has dismounted. A peasant is standing near him, an Alsatian, evidently, who is explaining, stretching his arm out always in the same direction; he is pointing, no doubt, because the dragoon cannot understand a word of his *patois*.

Alsace! I cannot describe my emotion. You would think me a mystic, a visionary: I thought my heart would burst! At every step I repeated: "Alsace! Alsace!" The blood surged to my head. I saw the landscape red. I wanted to speak to my men. But there are moments when this is impossible. . . . Two hundred metres more. . . . A ditch! I took a run, meaning to jump and land beyond the boundary-stone. Ugh! . . . I picked myself up and limped three paces . . . then I fell. The men hurried up. "You are wounded, Lieutenant. But no one fired." It was a severe sprain. My ankle was as big as my knee in ten minutes. It was too stupid. I cried with rage; I tore up the grass near me; I spat upon the clods. But no more. I should break my pen.

So now I have been in hospital at C—— for three weeks, stretched on a *chaise-longue*, bored to death, swearing in Alsatian and in French, and snarling at my orderly.

There are such numbers of wounded. . . . I devour the newspapers. But we are getting on. Or, rather, we shall get on. Just at present it's awful. They have ten machine-guns to our one, and they mow us down like grass. Those who have escaped from the German army tell us fearful things. I will not repeat them. I do not want to be too much moved. What is happening in Lorraine is particularly awful. Jean is there with his regiment. I know nothing of him. May God keep him!

Where are the Weisses? . . . Have they been able to pass through the lines? . . . In Alsace, just as in France, no one believed in war. The Germans told them just what they liked. So they were taken by surprise. What tragedies there have been! How many are at this moment hiding in the woods, hunted down by German patrols! Dozens of them come over to us every day. Brave Alsace! Charles Weiss must be somewhere in Poland. You remember how he used to say to us: "War will be declared in the spring. I shall have time to make tracks." Poor fellow! What he must be enduring if he is still alive! Can it be true that not two months ago Weiss, my brother, and I were with you on the mountains? It was a beautiful time! But wasn't it an hallucination?

And Friedensbach is French again — the whole valley as far as Thann. Friedensbach French! My parents, who are still there, tell me that it was delirious, indescribable. . . . Döring and Kummel made off like hares. They were seen clambering with all their belongings into

the train which carried off the officials, and which, for once, behaved like an express, and looking out of the window with white, scared faces, scrutinizing the bushes and the farmyards. . . . Friedensbach without Kummel! I have hopes of seeing it again in the course of the war. It would be vastly amusing.

How can I joke? . . . What is left of my poor regiment? How many of my friends, and of my men, who are my friends too, will come back? However, what consoles me a little is that I shall be with them in a week, ready to make up for lost time. We shall win. We must! There can be no shadow of a doubt. If the individual perishes, what does it matter! If only France is victorious! If only our little country becomes French again!

As I have some time on my hands now, and as you will hear nothing of me when once I am in the thick of it again, I am going to copy out a description of the entry of the French into Mulhouse from the field-diary of one of my comrades, who was brought into hospital here three days ago, only slightly wounded. What I would have given to see it myself! It makes me furious again to think of it! Steady! This fellow, a Second-Lieutenant like myself, is a calm, thoughtful, critical chap. So his notes have a real documentary value. If they were written by an Alsatian, one might distrust them — enthusiasm plays tricks with the eye and the judgment — but this Parisian is above suspicion. I am prouder of my Alsace than ever!

What is happening with you in Switzerland? . . . Be on your guard. . . . Belgium, Luxemburg. . . . What next?

Your old friend and pupil greets you cordially. When shall I write to you again? . . . When shall we meet again? . . . One must not think. One must act at present. I long to begin.

Your Affectionate
RENÉ BOHLER.

EXTRACT FROM A FIELD-DIARY.

August 7.— Sudden orders to leave X——. 1.30. Fine starry night. We are to advance. There is some excitement. We march silently along the frontier. We arrive at the entrance to a forest. "Go and reconnoitre," says the captain to me; he presses my hand. I set off at the head of a patrol.

The frontier. Glorious moment! I order arms to be presented at 5.30 a.m. We advance cautiously. Not a shot. Only one of the men calls my attention to a riderless horse galloping through the wood.

The first Alsatian village: Y——. Cheerful houses, flowers, an open road. Two devout old ladies come out of the church, and make off hastily, keeping close to the walls, without looking at us. The priest arrives on the scene. He comes towards me, holding out his hand. He asks for help. A German dragoon is dying in the church, shot in the stomach. I send word to the doctor

in the rear. At the end of the village, I call a halt. The men pile arms and wait.

The peasants show themselves, gaining confidence. The first who comes to us cannot speak French, but he brings two baskets of plums and distributes them. When I offer to pay he laughs and refuses the money. Then comes an entire family, with bread, wine, and butter. They are delighted to talk French. The young daughters pour out wine for the men. The father, a well-to-do farmer, offers us information concerning the local topography and what he knows of the German movements.

We set off again. This time every one is out on the doorsteps. They salute us, but without speaking. A peasant woman crosses herself and says to me, as I pass: "Take care; they are so cruel!" A group of men in the market-place applaud. An old man with a white imperial comes and stands before me with his son, gives a military salute, and cries: "Long live France!" The women at the windows clap their hands.

Another village. Confidence is gaining ground. We feel that there is joy in the hearts of all those who come to meet us. A large group of men, young and old, await us at the entrance of the village. They all want to shake hands with me. "Only think!" says one of them. "You are the first French officer to enter Alsace." Another, a huge fellow wearing a blacksmith's apron, cries: "Bring us Forstner!" All join in the laugh. They want to give the men more wine. I have to stop them.

All of a sudden there are shots. At last; it is almost a relief to come upon them. There they are, crouching in their trenches, in front of Z——. The first whistle of the bullets. Then an attack, sudden and violent. One does not know. One does not see. And presently we find ourselves mixed up with them in their trenches. They make off, leaving four dead, the first I have seen.

We enter the village. The Colonel orders a duly impressive march past. The inhabitants show themselves freely, their faces beaming. They cannot get over having seen the precipitate flight of the Prussians. The colours pass. All salute them. It is warm, clear, and fine. I am dead tired and full of glee. It is truly a festival here. I am billeted on a worthy fellow who fought in 1870. "It's all right this time," he says. He wants to tell me about his campaigns. But I cannot listen. I am half-asleep as I stand.

A night of alarms. Firing goes on unusually. Is it an illusion? . . . Are they returning? Anyhow, I cannot sleep. My host is greatly distressed that I should not have benefited by his bed.

August 8.— A calm morning. A German aeroplane pays us a visit. We fire at it. Where are our machines? Are we not the masters of the air? . . . I visit my outposts. What a beautiful country!

Luncheon with the Captain at a private house. The host serves us with enthusiasm. His eyes are fixed upon us with a sort of adoration. But he can only speak German. His wife, a pretty and well-educated Alsatian,

knows French, fortunately. She has been to a boarding-school at Montélibeard, and is proud of it. "Then, it's all over now," she says; "we shan't see them again? We shall meet at Mulhouse next 14th of July." She brings us dainty dishes which the whole family has been preparing for us. "It will be better this evening. We shall have had more time." They refuse payment of any kind.

A sudden order to attack. The inhabitants distribute fruit to the men. In the wood the troops are in fighting formation. Hares are frolicking about, and the men are amused. I cannot perceive any emotion among them. The country is beautiful, the inhabitants are amiable, it's a fine adventure. A few shots. Silence. When we debouch at ——, the Prussians have decamped again. We begin to think this strange. We learn that they have evacuated Alsace, and are entrenched behind the Rhine. Four dragoons come in. The road to Mulhouse is clear. One of the dragoons is so excited by the news he brings that he shouts it aloud to all comers.

We advance column by column, quick march. It is difficult to believe we are marching to battle. The men are singing gaily. Outside all the houses women offer wine and children give or scatter flowers. What an extraordinary progress!

We enter ——, one of the working-class quarters of Mulhouse. It was deeply impressive. An enormous crowd, ardent and enthusiastic, was ranged upon the

pavements. All the workmen stood bare-headed. Many press forward to shake hands with me. Cries of "Long live France!" and "Bravo!" resound. The children sing or whistle the *Marseillaise*. The Captain, hitherto so impassible, has tears in his eyes. My sergeant says to me: "To think we are in the enemy's country!" And one of my men, deeply moved, declares: "All the same, Lieutenant, it's worth while to have one's head broken for such people!" Now the band plays and the flag is unfurled. It is the great march past so often dreamt of! I think of many famous entries: Milan, the triumphant returns, and the dreams of the vanquished of 1870. To be present at such a realization at the first blow is too magnificent, too overwhelming! We halt in the suburb, in front of a shop. The tradesman, a big jovial fellow, calls my men, distributes ham and sausages among them, and refuses all payment. But he demands order in a stentorian voice: "Every man in his turn! . . . They shall all have some." And he cries again: "This is to avenge my son, who is with the Schwobs." A woman arrives, her arms full of boxes of cigars and cigarettes, and distributes them among the delighted and astonished men.

We were billeted in a working-class quarter. All the inhabitants rushed out, offering wine and all sorts of things. It was becoming rather too strong. I had to restrain them. But a young, bright-eyed girl came to me, saying: "You must let us give things to your men, Lieutenant. We have been waiting for you for so long."

Every one was eager to put us up. Our hosts said with tears in their eyes: "It's too beautiful! It's like a dream!" And again, in the course of the meal, the warning was repeated: "Take care. They are so cruel!" There is a holiday fever in the billets, in spite of the silence prescribed.

August 9.— Another sudden departure. Two o'clock in the morning. We pass through the wakeful town, and find the houses open and brightly lighted. We are going to occupy the heights overlooking the Ill. The artillery is being massed behind us. The General assembles the officers and explains that we shall probably force the forest of La Hardt and march on the Rhine. What a beginning!

It is Sunday. The bells are ringing. The Mulhousians in their holiday dress come to see us. We talk and laugh. It is like a fine Sunday in the provinces, or Longchamp before the review. And bells on every side, joy in every heart.

Five o'clock. Departure. The whole brigade is to march towards the north. The Germans are coming back. We are to move rapidly. One division is already engaged. It must be supported. The roar of cannon is heard. This time it is really battle. We pass through a village, and then through Mulhouse, faster and faster. The inhabitants are greatly agitated. There are people on every doorstep, and all are anxious to give wine to the soldiers. Young girls run along beside the columns to empty the bottles they have in their hands. There are

many anxious faces, especially among the women. And the same words are repeated on every hand: "Courage! Confidence! Take care! Bravo!" and there is the same eagerness to press the hands of the officers.

A house near the station is already riddled with fragments of shell. We are going through Mulhouse. In the Rue de Colmar people are hurrying into their houses. The artillery cuts across us, galloping towards the east. All of a sudden a good fellow, running up to me, pushes me on to the pavement: "Look out! Take care! There they are!" I have scarcely had time to understand when, as I emerge upon a bridge, I am greeted by bullets. The Captain, cold and elegant, advances firmly. We follow him. The fire becomes hotter. The Captain, calm as ever, crosses the street without bending his head, looking for an opening. At last he finds a court, and signs to us. We hurry into it, and breathe for a moment. But the Captain sends me with my section to meet the enemy. I find myself in front of a wide expanse of waste ground, between two houses. I see the Germans; I hear their words of command. My men, full of self-confidence, fire steadily, with no trace of panic.

Day is dying, and night is upon us. It is very fine. The sky is thickly sprinkled with stars. The melancholy bugles of the Prussians are sounding signals, the mystery of which weighs on our hearts, in spite of ourselves. Are they going to charge? It is already very dark, when a good woman comes down from the neighbouring house. Lying on the ground, she calls one of the men, and hands

him a bucket of coffee. Then the fire slackens. But on the east the cannonade and rifle-fire are terrific. Great flames shoot up in the distance; one hears a tremendous clamour. Poor creatures, loaded with packages, come running towards us. They have been driven out of their houses by the Germans. They weep. We try to comfort them. We have almost ceased firing. The men are joking to pass the time.

Two o'clock in the morning. I am going to make a reconnaissance towards the railway-station, whence they were firing on us. I arrive at the gates without hearing a shot. I climb over them. Nothing, absolute silence. Behind, the road stretches away, white and empty. Is it all over?

August 10.— Noise on the road, carts and voices. Are they reinforcements? I go towards the road to find out, and am fired at. I hurry back to my men. We wait anxiously.

Day is breaking. Suddenly there is a shout: "Who goes there?" The reply is a terrific volley from machine-guns, in front of us, to the right, to the left. Bullets scream and twist over our heads. The plaster of the surrounding houses crumbles, the windows are shattered. It is impossible to fire. We do not know where the volley comes from. I do not know where my company is. Suddenly a brisk fire breaks out on our left. Have we been turned? I order the men to fall back. By leaps and bounds, under the bullets, we reach the canal. It is impossible to pass. We are under fire from every

side. At last I find an opening, a narrow alley, and discover my battalion huddled in a network of streets. The people in the houses are looking at us. They bring out hot wine to us. Ah! the good creatures!

The Major sees me and comes towards me. "It's all up with us!" he says. The Captain adds: "I believe we are surrounded, but we must wait till it is lighter." Shells are now sweeping the street into which the narrow alley where we are crouching debouches. How are we to get out? Creeping against the walls, we defile in good order. From time to time a shell whirls over our heads, doing no damage.

Now we are out on the banks of the Ill. It is an exquisite morning. We see no one. We climb the slopes of the Ill and march, famished and exhausted, but not in disorder. At last we halt in a village, after marching for miles. . . . How blessed to rest! We go into billets. The inhabitants welcome us as before. Have they heard the news or not? They see, of course, that we are retreating, but they show no sign of distrust or fear. We can breathe quietly, and the night passes without any alarms.

"We're still at home in Alsace, sir," says my sergeant.

From Victor Weiss.

FRIEDENSBACH,
October 30, 1914.

DEAR FRIEND,

How many things have happened in three months!

I ought to have written before in answer to your kind letter, but we have been having a terrible time. . . . Strange that we did not believe war was coming. We were too near the powder-magazine to know what was going on inside. Up to the very last day our masters fed us on false news; war was already declared when they were telling us that everything would be arranged. We learned the truth only when the first shots were fired from the summits of the Vosges. An hour afterwards François, who was working at his thesis for his doctor's degree with us, had gone to the forest. We spent some hours of mortal anxiety. How many of our poor Alsatians have been shot down like dogs as they were gliding along from tree to tree towards the frontier!

One morning about seven o'clock shots were heard close at hand. Our masters made off in all haste — policemen, Customs officers, officials of every kind, Döring, and Kummel, bareheaded, his red hair bristling on his Pan-German skull, dressed, in his agitation, in a dressing-gown, and clasping the bust of the Emperor in his arms. . . . We have not seen him since. Shortly afterwards we heard the hurried tramp of the Chasseurs Alpins in our street. Then, how did it happen? I don't know. In a minute all the flowers in the gardens were gathered: they fell in showers from the windows on to the blue caps; in a minute, the tricoloured flags appeared. I could not have believed that there were so many in Friedensbach: faded, crumpled, ragged, time-worn as they were, they shook out gaily in the August sunshine. Near me,

leaning out of the same window, was my father. Eighty-five years old! Like all the rest of us, he was weeping silently. Looking up at that venerable head, the officers saluted with their swords. . . . The flag was dipped. . . . It is impossible to describe such things.

A month later my beloved and honoured father died quietly in his arm-chair. Since that march past of the Chasseurs Alpins in our Friedensbach street, he had never spoken. He was already gone. What more had he to wait for in life? We wrapped him in the historic flag. At the grave there was a section of the Alpins, the band, the Major of the battalion: "I bow before this witness of Alsatian suffering." My gallant father! It was the faith of these men which prepared the days through which we are now living.

And whom did we see one morning standing at the garden-gate but François in the uniform of a foot Chasseur. He had been three days in the forest, hunted by Customs officers and rangers. . . . He was arrested by the French as a spy, and imprisoned. There was an enquiry. Now he is a corporal. The most unlikely things seem natural in these days. One adapts oneself. One accepts. If the moon came down to earth it would hardly astonish us.

And now I must tell you of our sorrow. And it is because of this that I have delayed writing to you so long, hoping every day to hear that our Charles is a prisoner in Russia. This would mean that two months later he would be a French soldier! Alas! this news has

not come to us. Two postcards, six lines, told us that he was in East Prussia, and then in Poland. . . . We can imagine what is going on in the heart of this boy. I am still waiting confidently. Vigorous, intelligent, with a will of iron, our Charles will find his hour. It will come. It has perhaps already come. But how far away Russia is! . . . Think of us. I believe in telepathy. Send out sympathetic fluids to us, more and ever more. My wife worries terribly. She sends her remembrances to you, and so does our little Marie, our consolation in all these trials, the only one of our children left to us; for Suzanne is a nurse at Besançon, where she is devoting herself heart and soul to the wounded. Ah! why to the devil am I sixty-three years old?

Defend Switzerland well if she is attacked. I press your hand in the Alsatian fashion, which means that I almost crush it.

Your Friend,
VICTOR WEISS.

From Jean Bohler.

X——,
May 10, 1915.

DEAR MASTER AND FRIEND,

I have scarcely written to you. Only a few words on postcards. I am like that; it costs me more of an effort to seize a pen than to go into battle. It is an indolence of the mind that I find it very hard to overcome. I think, too, that I have seen too much. Things that cannot be told. If I am going to try today, it is be-

cause you and your people ought to know what sort of a war they have imposed on us.

First of all I must explain why I have leisure to write. I have two bullets, one in my leg, one in my shoulder. They are nursing and coddling me, and operating on me too. I am beginning to get up. And I am so fat and rosy that within five or six weeks I shall rejoin my battery, where my Captain is anxiously awaiting the return of his Second-Lieutenant — for I have been a Second-Lieutenant since January. I have good news from home. At the end of every letter there are the words *Courage, my son.* Father writes *courage;* mother, *my son.* With that in my pocket-book and my heart I would go to the end of the world, and at any rate to the end of Alsace. Dear country! The part of it we have retaken is being furiously bombarded by the Kummels. How many villages are now nothing but heaps of stones! Friedensbach, which our troops took in the early days of the war, has fared better. From time to time, however, Kummel sends a greeting across the mountain, more or less haphazard. On New Year's Eve, the shoemaker Herzog and his apprentice were killed in their workshop, and in February a woman and her two children! . . . War!

There is good news from René. He is fighting in Alsace. You will not be surprised to hear that he has already been twice mentioned in dispatches. I am proud of my younger brother.

Have you heard that Emile Zumbach fell at the wood of La Grurie? His "escape" from Alsace was an

extraordinary business. Always modest and taciturn, he fought with a bravery and contempt of death that won him the military medal. And he was shot through the heart in an attack, just ten paces from the German trench. Gallant friend! The first of our little band to go! Who will be the next?

And André Berger, of whom René said that night on the mountain: "He disgusts me; when he talks you would think his mouth was full of powdered sugar"—Berger, so cold, so distant, so provoking, has splendid reports, as one who is always ready for a tough job. Bravo!

I have little or no news of the poor Weisses. François is fighting with us. As to Charles, who was surprised by the declaration of war on the confines of Russia, and closely watched, no doubt he was in the hurly-burly from the very first. You know him. You realize how he must have suffered. There has been no word of him for a long time. What has happened to him? I dare not think of it, and I will say no more, for fear of saying too much.

Truly, war is a more ignoble business than anything that could be imagined. Ignoble is a euphemism. No words can express it. Alsace's greatness in the eyes of history will lie in the fact that she consented to suffer rather than provoke war. Now I understand my father's answer to the stranger who asked him: "Do you wish for revenge (*la revanche*)?" "We feel we have no right," he replied, "to send millions and millions of men to their

death in order to put an end to the injustice of which we are the victims. We will never cease to bear witness to the violence done to us, to protest against it in the name of human dignity and as a conscientious duty. But that very conscience forbids us to desire the butchery which would deliver us. If we stand fast, what should be will be. I believe in the efficacy of suffering." I remember that I felt indignant at the time. How could I understand at the age of eighteen? My father had seen and had made war.

And now it is my turn. And I say again that war is worse than ignoble. The day after a battle! The ground strewn with débris, dying horses rolling in their own entrails, shell-holes half full of water, and in them wide-eyed corpses already livid and stinking under the sun or the rain. It's horrible! It's hideous! I have vomited at the sight.

We must draw our strength from this ugliness of war. The filthier it is, the greater is the crime of those who planned it, who let it loose at their own hour, and decreed that it should be atrocious, savage, without quarter, stained with every crime, in the hope that our hearts would fail us and that we should fall on our knees. The foul deeds by which they hoped to subdue us have revealed our duty to us. It is very simple. We must put an end to war. We must harry those who have made it a national industry. And that is why the most ardent anti-militarists are fighting like lions. An awful task is laid upon us. But we know (and we Alsatians by

experience) what the sufferings of the world would be if we did not accomplish it. It may count upon us.

It was on the 25th of August, 1914, that I first realized the sort of enemy we have to deal with. That evening we were fighting in Lorraine, thirty kilometres from Metz. From the place where our battery lay we could see the time on the clock-tower of Mars-la-Tour. Alas! it was not yet the hour of deliverance! Our soldiers held their ground with a demoniacal recklessness, which was enhanced by the attraction of that beloved soil we hoped to free. We fought from dawn to sunset. In the evening the battlefield lay before us with all its horrors, its ghastly sights. I shall remember the spectacle as long as I live. It was about eight o'clock in the evening. The country rose and fell in undulations as far as the eye could reach. On every side were the dead and wounded abandoned by the Germans. A lowering sky, a red globe very low on the horizon, gave a sinister aspect to fields and woods and hills. We marched forward silently in the fading light in the midst of corpses, wounded, and dying men, imploring our pity: *Durst . . . trinken* (Thirst . . . drink). A German whose right cheek was hanging loose like a red rag, murmured: *Arzt . . . ein Arzt* (A doctor). But the words, passing through the gaping hole in his face came to us in a vague sound, so transformed that only the profound pity we felt for the miserable man enabled us to understand them. In the midst of all the death-rattles, the screams of the dying, we heard in the distance a strident, horrible whistle,

rending the heavy air, and rising above the concert of groans. It was no doubt some wounded man who was spending all his remaining strength in an appeal for help which never came.

Of course, we picked up all the German wounded we could take, and put them on our waggons. We formed our park towards midnight in the darkness, near a village where there had been furious fighting during the day. The next morning at dawn we gathered up brains, distorted limbs, and skulls already rotting, between the legs of our horses and our guns. We had unknowingly bivouacked on a spot where the struggle had been particularly fierce.

But another spectacle of horror lay before us. Passing through the village which the Germans had held till the night before (Rouvres, between Etain and Metz), we found a heap of corpses of women and young girls. One of them still clasped in her blood-stained arms a baby whose little body was riddled with bayonet wounds. We wept with rage and grief. In this same village we were told that a man who had been dragged away by the soldiers was just about to be shot against a wall when his daughter, a charming little fair-haired creature of seventeen — I saw her corpse — threw herself on her knees before the officers, begging for her father's life. They repulsed her brutally. They made her witness his execution. Shortly afterwards, her mutilated body was thrown on to the heap of female corpses at the entrance to the village. Into what a hell we have gone down!

All this was only a beginning. Since then I have seen such horrors that I sometimes wonder whether they are possible, or whether I am the prey of terrible hallucinations. What is death compared to the life we should lead if we were beaten? I assure you one needs more courage to offer a moral resistance to the sight of all these horrible and atrocious things than to face an avalanche of high explosives and 10.5 shells. But fear nothing. Ask yourself no questions. We shall not be beaten. This will not go on. They will fall. The weight of their crimes will drag them down into the abyss.

We have already gone through many dark hours. Well, never, even when we were utterly exhausted, drunk with fatigue, did we despair.

I was at Senlis on the 2nd of September. My division had orders to protect the left wing of our army. We maintained contact with the enemy. At Saint-Chamant, and then on the high road from Senlis to Meaux, we exhausted our ammunition fighting against an enemy three times superior to us in numbers. How many comrades I left there, officer friends and gallant troopers who died with such simplicity beside us! Just one last look which means "Stand fast!" and then the other world.

We were retreating slowly under an incessant hail of bullets. On the evening of the 2nd of September, when we passed through Senlis again, shells were already raining upon it, pursuing us without intermission. You cannot imagine what our feelings were as we marched once more through the town where the population had made

festival in our honour two days before. They had received us as their saviours, throwing flowers to us. And these strangers, who knew what awaited them, who knew the enemy was only three kilometres away, and were already getting their first shells, still encouraged us. The women smiled, and the old men pressed our hands.

After this came the strenuous days of the Marne; I was at Barcy, Marcilly, Strépilly, Ay-en-Multien. Then there were the battles on the Aisne, the march towards the sea, Lassigny and Roye. Then five months in mud up to our necks, between the waters of earth and sky, dragging with us our 75's, which are like our children. We are still confident. Our soldiers are splendid. Yet there are hours when the human machine gets out of gear, when the springs are relaxed. Then I think of Alsace. I look back to the hill of Wissembourg. I remember my vow. I probe the depths of my being, and I find a peaceful heart, an unfaltering will.

Sometimes I close my eyes the better to see the faces of those who have fallen beside me. It is really difficult to distinguish myself from them, for at the front the barrier between living and dead is so slight. . . . And now, more fortunate than many mutilated companions, I am waiting at the hospital for orders to return. I hope to arrive before the great offensive. This phrase of my Captain's will go with me: "Let us do a gallant duty gallantly."

From Jean Bohler.

June 20, 1915.

I am off on Saturday. I don't say that I go with joy — such a word would be offensive — but certainly I shall go calmly, glad to rejoin my comrades in that furnace where the life of man is but as straw. We must make an end of those who have attempted to murder Europe. It may seem strange to you, but I have no hatred in my heart. Indeed, one very rarely hears a violent word from the lips of soldiers — I mean of those who have been at the front. The methods of our enemies disgust and revolt us: burning men alive by means of *Flammenwerfer*, suffocating them by gases. . . . Yet we respect the combatant who offers his life as we offer ours. What we want to overthrow is a system which perverts the moral sense. A wounded man in the bed next to mine expressed himself this morning as follows: "They are sick . . . we must cure them."

I read everything relating to Switzerland with the greatest interest. Like us, like all the countries in the world, you have been encircled, cajoled, fettered economically. It is not surprising, therefore, that many should have been bound by their interests, and that others — so skilfully have facts been perverted — have been unable to believe in the enormity of the crimes committed. The recently naturalized tradesmen and journalists have done their best to trouble the waters. True, all of us in France looked for unanimous indignation on the part of neutrals, after the violation of Belgium and

Luxemburg and the innumerable atrocities that were committed. Little Switzerland, neutral out of the respect due to treaties, protesting in the sight of the world against those who by violating treaties make all international relations impossible! What a lesson it would have been! . . . What authority it would have given you, with what respect you would have been surrounded!

But enough of this. These matters do not concern me. It is your business to thresh them out among yourselves. On the other hand, what you tell me about your comrades in the regiment, and about your people, the real Swiss people, fills me with joy. They know, above all they feel that our cause is theirs, that our defeat would be that of liberty, that the bird of prey must be struck down. Our wounded repatriated from Germany tell us of their journey through your country, of the crowds at the stations from Schaffhausen to Geneva in the middle of the night, of things which bring tears to one's eyes. The words your authorities have not said have been cried aloud by your people. They throw their whole hearts into the carriages of our wounded, together with their flowers and letters and parcels. You cannot imagine how these spontaneous manifestations strengthen us.

I can assure you that our soldiers deserve this sympathy. I have seen hundreds of them die. Their deaths have not been at all like those described in well-meaning *feuilletons*, deaths embellished by a theatrical gesture. A grandiloquent cry, a sublime apostrophe to the enemy.

They have done what they could. They have offered their lives. The hour has come to give them. They close their eyes; they suffer in silence or they moan; they die. No sight could be more sublime. And nearly all these men have wives and children, and love life. Yet they have agreed to the sacrifice. They well know why. Would it be worth while to live in slavery?

I can assure you that our soldiers understand. What do they all say? —"We are fighting that our children may never know anything of this beastliness. We shall have to pay the price, but it will never happen again." You would look in vain for a Kummel among us. They accomplish the most extraordinary things. It seems quite simple to them. And one never hears a word of pride or exaggeration from them. If you question those who have decorations, nine times out of ten you will get this answer: "I only did my duty like all the other chaps." I declare that I, in my turn, do not exaggerate when I say that in their quasi-unanimity our soldiers are magnificent. There is a mighty force in them. They know that they are in the right. Above all, you must not believe that the Germans are our equals in moral strength. They are formidable adversaries, it is true. They have plenty of pluck. But they fight like Germans, whereas our soldiers fight like Frenchmen and like *men*. Theirs is a different kind of strength. And that is why we go back to the front, where death lies in wait, as one returns to life. For us it is there. There is no paradox in what I am writing to you.

There is only one thing that grieves me more than I can say. Too many of our men, so brave that one feels inclined to kneel to them, do not understand Alsace nor the Alsatians. I excuse them, but it often hurts me to hear the things they say. I excuse them, because these soldiers, who come from the Corrèze, Brittany, the Gard or the Drôme, know nothing of our little country. They exclaim in their first stupefaction: "But they talk German!" After what has passed, it seems, indeed, impossible to them that French sentiments should be translated into German *patois*.

It would not have been possible that there should have been no defections in Alsace. We should have been more than human had this been the case. But do they count? Do our soldiers know what we have suffered? Do they realize what it means to have had the weight of a whole army of officials working to extirpate the very roots of memory for forty-four years? Do they know that five hundred thousand Alsatians have given up everything to remain French, that as many Germans have taken their places, and that these Germans call themselves Alsatians? Do they know what it is to struggle for nearly half a century against one's manifest interest with a population of a million and a half against sixty-five millions? . . . No. Only those who have done it can know.

I believe René sent you the field-diary of one of his comrades, describing the entry of the French into Mulhouse. That was the cry of Alsace, the cry of her, uttered

under extraordinary conditions. Is it generally known that in our country there are spies everywhere, observing, noting, and denouncing? That the Alsatians call the prisons to which they are sent in crowds the Hôtel de France? That the German courts-martial have already condemned those who allowed their French sympathies to be known to terms of imprisonment amounting in the aggregate to *three thousand years?* And that more than one Alsatian has already paid for his fidelity to France with his life?

Civilians fired on us in Alsace, say some of our soldiers. No doubt. But who were they? Do our soldiers know that the German rangers had orders to put on civilian clothes as soon as war was declared, to go to the *Kommando* for ammunition, and to take to the forest?

This misunderstanding will pass away. It is already passing. If our enemies hoped to embroil us with France, it was because they know neither the French nor the Alsatians. Everything will come right in time. The drama of our lives will be known in all its details. Then the chaff will be separated from the grain. All that is needed is to explain, to explain oneself.

I assure you that there is not a man in my battery who does not know now what Alsace is. On a certain day one of them had made an offensive remark. Seeing my distress, the Captain gave me orders to assemble my gunners, and to speak to them of my province. I described the hour we spent at Wissembourg. All had tears in their eyes. The offending gunner came to me, blush-

ing, and said: "Lieutenant, there is no greater fool than he who speaks without knowing. You must forgive me. I'll wipe that out." Ah! he did wipe it out, my gallant Martin! I saw him die a mile or two from the frontier of the annexed province. His eyes were fixed on mine. He said nothing, I said nothing — it was during a spell of hurricane fire — but I understood.

When shall I write to you again? . . . Even if I do not answer your letters, do not forget me. A friend's letters are a talisman. Let your thoughts follow me. I am constantly seeing in a dream, or rather in a nightmare, the corpses of women and children heaped up before one of the burning houses of Rouvres. In my waking hours I think of the innocent dead in Belgium, in Armenia, in Serbia, in Poland, in my own Alsace, and in my France, and I am all eagerness to return to the atrocious conflict, out of which we have sworn, a less hideous humanity shall emerge. Farewell.

Yours,

JEAN BOHLER.

From René Bohler.

July 1, 1915.

DEAR MONSIEUR REYMOND,

Only a word. Here I am on one of the Vosges peaks; I may not tell you exactly where. But I can distinctly see through my field-glasses my parents' house, and the window of the schoolroom. Sometimes I see something moving in the garden. I say *something*,

because it is very vague. But I think to myself: "It's Father. It's Mother. . . ." And the Boches only fifty kilometres off! Truly there is something magnificent about this war for us even when we die of it. Are we not doing our duty? If you could have seen what we have seen! I tell you this war is a crusade. Before us lies the plain of Alsace, with the ruins of Cernay, of Watwiller, of Uffholz, and in the distance the smoke of Mulhouse, and the bend of the Rhine. . . . The claws of the Boche are still deeply embedded here. . . . Where is Kummel lurking? May Providence bring us face to face again some day! We have so many things to say to each other!

Your friend,
RENÉ BOHLER.

From Victor Weiss.

FRIEDENSBACH,
September 15, 1915.

DEAR FRIEND,

We are in terrible trouble. François has been severely wounded on the Champagne front. His left leg was shattered and has been taken off above the knee. The poor fellow writes us such beautiful letters that we scarcely dare to pity him. He will come back to us — mutilated, it is true, but still, he will come back to us.

François a cripple! But this is not the worst. It is now a year since we have had a word from Charles. We have moved heaven and earth without getting any sign of life from him. It is horrible. . . . I reproach myself

bitterly. I say that when we were in Switzerland we should have stayed there and should not have returned to Alsace. But when one lives with the knife at one's throat, one ceases to distinguish the red hours from the grey ones. Too late! . . . One evening we saw the abject Kummel in great excitement, flags were unfurled, guns and waggons rolled along, and men defiled, singing their *Lieb' Vaterland, magst ruhig sein* at the top of their voices. War! Too late! Our Charles was already in the trap!

He must have thought of everything, dared everything, to get to the Russian lines. Day by day we shared the horror he must have felt at fighting in the ranks of those who were persecuting his country; we were consumed by his sufferings; we strengthened his efforts by the thoughts we sent out to him. . . . At night we wake with a start. It is like a dagger in our hearts: Charles, stolen by the Germans. Our little Marie is always saying: "Charles will come back." But we can no longer believe it. A year of silence! His poor mother! Anything would be better than these desperate hopes, these letters which fall into the void one after the other.

And now I come to the point of these few words. I have written to all the societies and all the officers in your country which undertake researches and identification among prisoners of war. You will find herewith all the available information about Charles' enrolment and the places to which the chances of war took him, as far as we know. Would you do us the kindness of going in

person to the various agencies and enlisting the sympathy of the directors in our grief, so that a supreme effort may be made. I ask it for the sake of our boy — I know that you loved him — for his mother's sake, for mine. We will await your answer as patiently as we can.

We send you our most affectionate greetings.

V. Weiss.

Reymond set to work without delay. He had interviews with kindly men, a little weary already of all the tragic things that had been brought before them for months. He went to Geneva. He returned there. They wrote letters. They wrote again and again. At last, after waiting two months, a very polite old man seated at a writing-table covered with papers spoke as follows:

"Charles Weiss? . . . We have gone through the lists of those who have died in Germany, and of the prisoners of war in Russia. . . . Nearly all the officers of the regiment in question have been killed or have disappeared. . . . The new ones can give no information. . . . The snow, the cold, the mud, the inundations. . . . The papers are at your service. You will see that we have tried everything. . . . You say the young man was an Alsatian? He has disappeared, like so many others."

"Disappeared?" repeated Reymond. "Do you mean dead?"

The old man shrugged his shoulders very gently. "Ah! . . ."

Reymond went away. It was a mild day in late October. The lake rippled between the stones of the quay. The red-and-green parasols twinkled gaily on the decks of the steamers; people were walking about and laughing; young couples were sitting on the benches of the promenades.

He had disappeared, the frank, merry boy. After all the long silence, this supreme silence of mystery. In that Poland, a martyr like himself, in some hastily dug hole, lay the body of this son of Alsace. . . .

From Victor Weiss.

FRIEDENSBACH,
November 18, 1915.

DEAR FRIEND,

It is now just a year and two months since we heard from Charles. Probably we shall never learn anything more about him. Do not raise false hopes in us. . . . We have heard from a trustworthy source that the regiment of our gallant son was literally destroyed at Lodz, and that his company was annihilated. The Russians may have shot him down when he was crawling towards them as to his saviours. Our Charles, so frank, so loyal! What he must have suffered!

The peace of the grave is grateful to those who have to bear such mortal tortures! There are times when his mother and I have a terrible sense of consolation. . . . He has ceased to suffer. On the other hand, I sometimes walk in our forests looking about everywhere, as if he were hidden in the hollow of some ditch. I call him in

my thoughts. The guns make answer: the German guns that threaten us, the French guns that defend us. I come home overwhelmed.

Bohler often comes to see me. He has good news of his boys.

There is grief and misery all around us. When the Germans retired, they carried off nearly all our men. They, too, were dragged to Poland. Jacob Schmoler, a boy barely seventeen, though he was big and strong, was of the number. The shock was too much for old Schmoler. He has rejoined Jacobine.

My poor wife makes my heart ache. She spends her days gazing at the photographs of our Charles and our Jacques. To think that two of our sons have died in the German army so that France may be free! . . . It is so senseless! You who have lived among us will understand, you will reverence these martyrs to the cause. We cannot weep for them as we should. We are too much embittered, too overwrought, too indignant. Three sons! . . . One is left, and he is mutilated. How we shall love him! But no joy will ever be able to still the weeping of our hearts.

Elsewhere, fathers and mothers know that their children died gladly. In Alsace, the death of our dear ones has been an agony: they have been shot by brutes or killed by the bullets of those whose victory they desired. When all is known! . . . The men of Wissembourg have many friends now.

In our misery we have one consolation: our boy did

not acquiesce in a lie. Deaths like his are not fruitless. They have the value and the weight of a curse.

Your unhappy
VICTOR WEISS.

From Henri Bohler.

FRIEDENSBACH,
January 7, 1916.

DEAR FRIEND,

Your letter moved us to tears. We recognized in it all the affection you bore our beloved ones, an affection they returned in full measure.

At the first moment we had not the courage to write to you. You must forgive us if the newspapers were beforehand with us. It all happened in one week. . . . On the Monday news came of the death of René, who was killed by a bullet through his forehead before Carspach. He fell face forward, before that Alsace to which he had long devoted his life. My wife and I had the sad consolation of seeing him once more. He was so beautiful, a smile on his face. He sleeps with hundreds of others in the churchyard of Moosch which you so often passed by with your pupils in former times.

On the Saturday of the same week, we heard of the death of Jean, who was killed with six of his men in the Argonne by a high-explosive shell. For some time past his letters had alarmed us. They were too beautiful, worthy of those whom death has chosen. . . . Jean, René. . . . Our sorrow is too great. We suffer all that a father and a mother can humanly suffer. Pity us. . . .

Our two boys! . . . The Weisses came to us at once. We mingled our tears.

For us, life is over. Yet for their sakes we try not to give way, and we repeat the words which Jean wrote in his last letter: "What does death matter when one is in the right?" Write to us often. Talk to us of them, only of them.

Until the war is over, we have too many duties at Friedensbach to allow us to go to Switzerland. Could you come to us, I would facilitate your journey as much as possible. You would read us our boys' letters, you would tell us what they used to say to you in former days, and recall that night on the mountain of which they had retained such radiant memories. It will be sweet and cruel to speak of those who have left us, of those we have given to France, and so to the most humane of causes.

Meanwhile if you can, pray for us.

My wife joins me in affectionate remembrances.

HENRI BOHLER.

XIV

June, 1916.

FROM Bassang the motor runs snorting along the road which climbs up the slope of the Vosges. It passes heavy lorries, hay-waggons, troopers; it overtakes gangs of road-makers and battalions resting between their stacked rifles. . . . Suddenly the road dives into a tunnel. . . . There is a glimmer which increases, then a light . . . it is Alsace, her blue mountains, her valleys, her villages beside the sparkling river. . . . A sound as of distant thunder. Yet the sky is clear, the horizon limpid. . . . Reymond bares his head. He greets this land which he loves as one loves one's native place.

Is he dreaming? . . . Is this thunder the echo of the interminable battle? . . . Urbès, Wesserling, then other villages, and in all Alsatian boys wearing the caps of the Chasseurs Alpins, the red *képi* of the foot soldiers; everywhere soldiers on the march, the supple, lively tread of the soldiers of France. . . . Is it possible? A spire rises above the trees, a red, white, and blue flag floats from the roof of the town-hall. And here is the street of Friedensbach, its stream, its gobbling geese, its fountain with the three jets, its roofs where the dormer windows are blinking, the stork's nest. The car draws up to let a battalion pass. The men are wearing helmets; they

carry their packs on their backs, and on these packs so many things that one sees they are going where the guns are roaring. It is an impressive sight: the swinging rifles, the eyes which have seen so many corpses, the ears which have heard so many dying groans, the tense jaws, the boots that hammer the pavement with all their nails.

"Where are they going?" Reymond asks the chauffeur.

"To Vieil-Armand."

Now the band begins to play. The windows of the school are thrown open; fifty little faces appear, hands are waved in greeting. Instead of Kummel there is a school-master in uniform who pinches the ears of laughing boys. There is a bunch of flowers on his desk, and on the blackboard the following copy is inscribed in white chalk: *One's country is a mother who has thousands of children. . . .*

"Wait for me a minute."

Reymond asks himself again if he is not the victim of some hallucination. He feels the need of speaking to some one, of hearing a familiar voice. There is the door he has so often pushed open and entered.

"Monsieur Reymond! You have come back!"

"Is it you, Madame Vogel?"

They look at each other. The fair-haired widow is dressed in mourning; her face is pale, and there are wrinkles at the corners of her eyes. She says in her slow voice:

"Oh! there is no one left. Mother is dead, father is dead. . . . They have taken Jacob from me."

Reymond was much moved. What should he be able to say presently?

He went back to the chauffeur.

"What were your orders?"

"To take you and your luggage to Monsieur Bohler's."

"All right. I will walk. I know the way. As to the luggage, leave it with the lodge-keeper."

The same road. The level crossing, the rocks crowned with broom. The cloud of dust in the distance is raised by the advancing battalion. The dull thunder of the guns has ceased. The swallows swoop and dart overhead.

What shall he say to them? He tries. He seeks after words. No, not that. . . . The bridge over the river. And now the whirr of the machinery, the slap of the belts, the plaintive murmur that used to accompany the voices that were translating Horace or Plato. Holding his cap in his hand as he used to do of yore, Grob, the lodge-keeper, opens the little side-gate. There is the court, the house with its glass *marquise*. The old servant comes to answer the bell. At the sight of Reymond, she wipes her eyes with her apron and murmurs something. In the dimness of the drawing-room, the shutters of which are half closed, he finds Monsieur and Madame Bohler, Monsieur and Madame Weiss, and little Marie clinging to her mother. There is a moment's silence. Monsieur Bohler advances, very calm, then Weiss. Reymond understands at once that they have pledged themselves to bear their sorrow valiantly. How changed they

are! how they have aged! how thin they have grown! Weiss's sturdy shoulders are bowed. Reymond does not speak, he feels his throat contract. He bows before the two women in mourning as he touches their cold hands. They sit down and look at each other. With Reymond, the absent ones have come back, those sons who filled the house with their gaiety, the dead they have so often invoked in vain! The two women suddenly hide their faces in their hands, little Marie throws her arms round her mother; they lament aloud. Weiss sobs; Monsieur Bohler stiffens himself stoically, but the tears roll down his cheeks. It is too pitiable! Reymond approaches the two men. What does he say? He does not know. He, too, sobs aloud.

It is good to weep together, to give way without shame, to offer tears of tenderness and gratitude to the young dead who have fallen for the salvation of the world, to go in search of them through space into the depths of silence, to embrace them, to commune with their love, to feel that they still live, like Justice.

After this it is possible to speak. All that was bitter and suffocating has been washed away; grief remains, grief bathed by these tears, serene and worthy of those who have departed.

"Our children were magnificent," said Monsieur Bohler. "True crusaders. So gay, so simple, so willing. We are right to weep for them, the emotion of our meeting has been sweet to them, but it is even more right that we should smile at them."

"They were so brave," said Weiss, "that we have no right to be cowards, have we, wife?"

"No. What you say is true. When I look at their portraits, I find no sadness in them. The sadness is in me, not in them."

"They gave their lives unhesitatingly," said Bohler. "Dear boys! They never caused us a moment of grief. They offered pure hearts to their country."

Memories of their childhood were evoked. Their sayings were quoted. Their letters were read. Things that had belonged to them were shown. Voices no longer tremble, for the sacrifice was so beautiful that they are no longer of those we call the dead. The desolate mothers pity other mothers who have suffered less than they. Marie asks:

"Why should we weep for those who are with God?"

They embrace her.

"Monsieur Reymond," says Madame Bohler with a sweet and sad maternal smile, "we have no one but you to remind us of the happy time when they were with us. You were our friend then; you are doubly our friend now. Will you come with us to see Jacques and René? . . . When we are with them we shall be able to find Charles and Jean . . . my little Jean!"

How beautiful it was! Alsace was never fairer. They walked by the road which winds along the foot of the mountain. Flowers in the hedges, flowers in the cracks of the walls, flowers between the stones, and then flowers on the graves. Here it is. *Jacques Weiss, aged* 23.

Hold fast that thou hast. . . . They gather round the stone. Madame Weiss bends over it; she arranges the young ivy shoots with gentle fingers, like a mother tucking her child into his cot. They are silent. Their thoughts take flight towards that other land of sorrow where Charles Weiss lies. How they go out in search of him there! They wander round those calcined beams which were villages; they traverse the gutted plains; they follow the course of sluggish rivers; they plunge into forests; they call and call. Then they come back to the grave before them. And Weiss speaks:

"To me, they are both here. I will have Charles's name cut on the stone. . . . And under it we will put . . ."

The stricken giant hesitates. May one say such things?

"Well, yes . . . we will put the first tooth he lost when he was five years old, and a lock of his hair. Then there will be something of him here. François and Suzanne will be able to come and visit both their brothers . . . both of them lent to the lie that they might still be Alsatians, and that this soil might remain faithful. I feel as if I had given them a hundred times over. What a present we have offered to France!"

A bugle says its say: three notes, gaily repeated, ringing out like a laugh. They can see the bugler in his blue cap in the square at Friedensbach. Four times he seems to cast his bugle heavenwards with a supple gesture; four times he repeats the joyous rhythm of his three notes.

The children are singing in the school. The awkward accent of these children, who are trying with all their hearts, is touching. How often Reymond had heard the doleful chant to which Kummel beat time *falling* to the earth! Today the song of the little Alsatians *mounts upwards*, because it is sung with joy and conviction, because they enter into it heart and soul, and thus it rejoices the swallows and dances with them as it leaves the rosy lips:

There is a word dearer than all others?
Liberty! Liberty!

"Liberty! Liberty!" repeated Victor Weiss. "Yes, children, you will know liberty; you will be happy, because your elder brothers died for you, after dire sufferings and tortures! . . . Useless sufferings? No, indeed. For they have raised up a great barrier, wider than the Rhine, higher than the Black Forest. . . . Ah! if only the French will understand! . . . I call upon them to understand; I call upon them to bow before my sons who died under the German flag. The German flag? Yes; but they were sacrificial victims. God heard the cry of their souls. He knows how often Charles tried to escape. He knows that the bullets of his rifle were fired into the ground. He knows, above all, how he died. He said: 'Come, brave little Alsatian! You bore your anguish courageously. Thanks to you, thanks to those who died like you, those who torture hearts stand for ever arraigned.'"

Outlined against the sky with his poor drawn face, Weiss is an image of sorrow.

And now the bells are ringing. Each day those who have fallen for Alsace on the mountains are laid to rest in her earth. A procession advances, the crucifix, the coffin draped in a flag, the priest, the choir-boys, the comrades of the dead man, the old men of Friedensbach, the children, who sing "Liberty! Liberty!" How many wreaths there are on the coffin! And women come out of the gardens and offer to the unknown those old-time flowers which are gathered at the foot of warm walls — marigolds, gallardias, campanulas. . . .

The military burial-ground adjoins the other burial-ground: here trees, rose-bushes, and leafy shade; there, crosses in their imposing nudity, set closely side by side, like a regiment on parade. The procession groups itself round the grave (other graves are open beside it). Standing in the sunshine, the priest makes the eternal gestures, blesses the corpse, and sends those Latin prayers which come from the depths of centuries heavenwards. There is the creak of straining ropes. . . . The soldiers salute, their hands smartly open against their caps.

And all the old men bring their heels together as well as they can, for there are some who fought at Magenta and Solferino; they are in front; behind are those who went through the accursed war; they are recognizable by the ribbon they wear so proudly; they did what they could! . . . No French corpse enters this enclosure without an escort of these old Alsatians. Brushed and

polished up, their wrinkled faces shining, they receive it as it comes out of the hospital, and accompany it to church; walking very slowly, following the upward path in fours, looking at each other at intervals that they may keep in line; and when the moment comes they, too, give the salute, laying their hands against their bald heads. The children salute as well as the old people. What a sight it is, these children of Alsace, these men, motionless in presence of this corpse which is slowly disappearing into the grave! If his mother, who does not yet know that he is dead, could see!

De profundis!

The bells of Friedensbach ring again, and then are silent. An officer is speaking now:

"In the name of the Colonel, in the name of all your comrades in the regiment who are at their posts up there (he points to the mountain), keeping watch over this valley of Alsace, Chief Adjutant Antoine, I come as your escort to the glorious threshold where sleep those who have given their lives for France. . . . These wreaths which our Alsatian brethren offer you are woven of the red of our holocausts and the green of our hopes; these flowers which have been gathered in the fields by your friends and bound into a sheaf typify the fidelity of our memories, the gratitude of our hearts, the prayer of our souls. . . . From the place where you sleep you will see this valley which your valour won back for us; between the hills you will see that plain of Alsace, where so many of our friends whom the valour of your comrades

will deliver are still suffering. . . . Sleeping in Alsace, you will sleep in France.

"Chief Adjutant Antoine, the flag which was never lowered to the enemy is lowered respectfully to salute your grave."

The guns thunder at Vieil-Armand. Up above, a little speck in the sky, a bird of prey hovers. All around it circle patches of smoke which the wind drives along gaily. . . . Another bird hastens to the spot: they mount, they glide along, they dance on the eddies of the air, they disappear in the tack-tack-tack of machine-gun fire. Presently there is nothing in the vast blue heavens but this flock of white sheep. The crucifix, the priest, the soldiers, the children, and the old men, have all disappeared.

"It is here," says Madame Bohler.

Once more they gather round a grave. *René Bohler, Second-Lieutenant, aged* 21; *died for France, December* 14, 1915.

Suddenly Madame Weiss makes this terrible speech:

"How happy we should be if they were all four here!"

They look at each other in silence. There are perhaps two thousand crosses. A name, a date . . . aged twenty, aged nineteen, aged twenty-three, aged twenty, aged twenty. . . . This regiment of the dead climbs the slope of the mountain impetuously, behind the flag which floats half-mast high. René is with them, in his post of command. On the other side of the wall is Jacques.

Jean sleeps in the Argonne, Charles in Poland. Looking at this nation of crosses, at their disciplined ranks, their friendliness to each other, it is easy to understand that mother's cry: "How happy we should be if they were all four here!" Here, that is to say together, side by side with those who dreamt the same dream, like the dead on the hill of Wissembourg. . . . Here. . . . One can come to see them and speak to them, can bring them flowers. Later, it will be a place of pilgrimage for fathers and mothers from all the provinces of France, from the north and from the south. They will get out at the station timid and bewildered. They will ask: "Where are those who fell in the war?" They will look for the name of their son in the interminable alleys. At last, holding each other by the hand, they will weep, and these tears, falling on the soil, will go to all.

The dead of Wissembourg watched over Alsace, holding her to the faith. And now the dead are on every mountain, in every village of the valleys, from the confines of Alsace to the confines of Lorraine. This chain of the dead encompasses the two provinces because they were worthy of it; prisoners of violence, they would not sell their souls. Soldiers of France who sleep in this earth, you would not have chosen a fitter resting-place.

The agony of the world, the moan of crucified lands, the cry of those who are mounting their Calvary, brood over these crosses. These soldiers heard this appeal. Rising in answer to it, they were found worthy to die for

justice. Their graves are not sad. Two men and two women in mourning are bending over them. And suddenly a calm voice says:

"How happy they are!"

THE END

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